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VOYAGES AND TRAVELS:
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OF THE
ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY,
BY SEA AND LAND,

From the earliest Ages to the present Time.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A CRITICAL CATALOGUE OF BOOKS OF VOYAGES AND TRAVELS.

BY
JOHN PINKERTON,
AUTHOR OF MODERN GEOGRAPHY, &c.

London:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, PATERNOSTER-ROW;
AND CADELL AND DAVIES, STRAND.

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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BY
SHARON TURNER, F.A.S.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

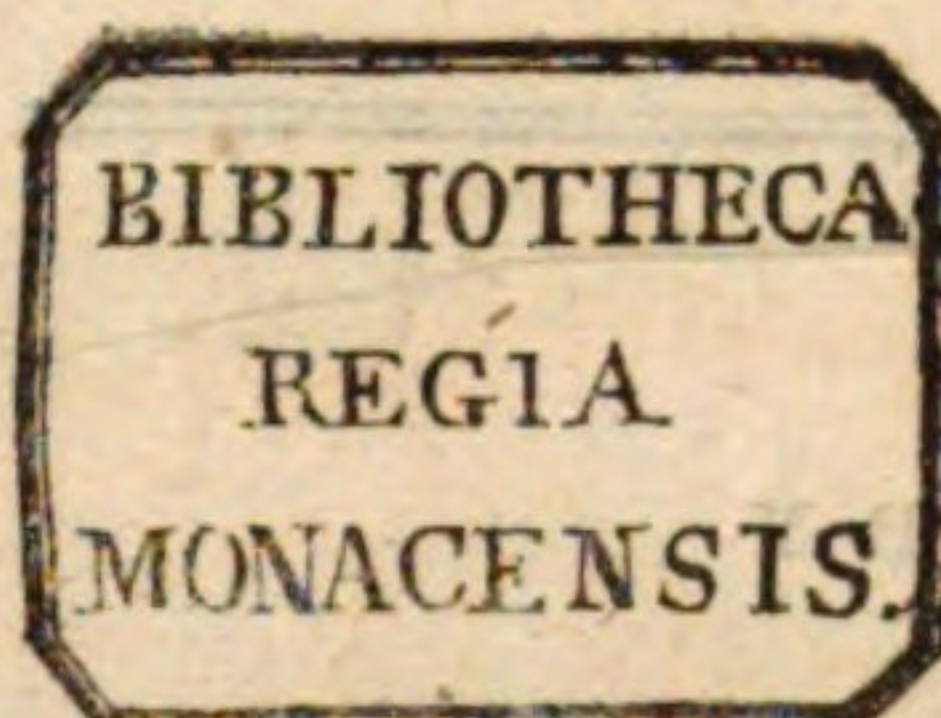
VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for LONGMAN, HURST, REES, & ORME, Paternoster Row.

1807.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
KINGDOMS



SHARON TURNER, F.A.S.
SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed by Luke Hansard & Sons,

near Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

P R E F A C E.

IN this second edition, those corrections and improvements have been made which an increased knowledge of the subject, and maturer reflection, have suggested. No labour has been spared to collect original information from every accessible source, and to state the facts obtained with as much conciseness as would be consistent with perspicuity.

The First Volume of this edition contains the history of the Anglo-Saxons, from their appearance on the Elbe to the Norman conquest. An introduction has been prefixed, comprising the most important facts concerning the first population of the Island, the manners of the Britons when the Romans invaded them, and the Roman conquest of the Island. This part has been added for the purpose of making the work a complete History of England to the Norman Conquest.

The Second Volume treats on the manners, landed property, government, laws, poetry, literature, religion, and language of the Anglo-Saxons. So much of our present state in all these interesting subjects has originated from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, that it was necessary to be minute and faithful in the inquiry concerning them. I have endeavoured to gratify the public curiosity by a diligent and accurate research. If I had not been apprehensive of wearying the patience of my readers, I could have wished to have pursued some of the articles to a greater extent. But it appeared to me that two volumes quarto were as much as the public could be expected to read on a part of our history so remote. Many of the subjects have occasioned much zealous controversy. In these questions I have disregarded all theory and dispute, and have confined myself to the task of stating

with care and truth the facts which I have found recorded on such points in the Anglo-Saxon writers.

The great object of the work has been to supply that vacuum which has been so long left in this part of our national annals. Although the period I have chosen embraces nearly a thousand years before the Norman conquest, and contains the root and trunk of most of our institutions, yet no other portion of our history has been so negligently studied. It has been the fashion to treat it as an unimportant excrescence of our general history. Milton thought the transactions of the Anglo-Saxon octarchy as uninteresting as the conflicts of wolves and kites; and our most popular historians, averse to the drudgery of research, have passed over the Anglo-Saxon period with contented ignorance. Hence all the valuable facts which were contained in ancient MSS. and in many contemporary writers, especially in the Sagas and other works of the Icelandic and Continental literature, which were not familiar to the English student, had been left unnoticed. The consequence of this has been, that many parts of our early history were suffered to remain so obscure and confused, as to repel the curiosity of the intelligent reader. The perusal of the death song of Ragnar Lodbrog first excited my attention to the subject; and the light which some inquiries into Icelandic literature threw on many interesting events in the life of Alfred, excited the desire to elucidate other dark and perplexed periods. The invaluable collection of inedited MSS. in the British Museum has amply gratified and rewarded my curiosity; and, assisted by these, I may be allowed to hope, without any indecorous confidence, that the leisure of sixteen years has not been fruitlessly applied, and that the student will find in this history a collection of original information, which will spare him the trouble of much fatiguing research.

Among the additions which have been made, in this edition, to the history of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, I have inserted, from that part of Cedmon's Paraphrase which treats on Paradise

P R E F A C E.

v

Lost, some speeches of Satan of considerable merit, that the curious reader may compare the rude thoughts of the Anglo-Saxon with the perfect conceptions of Milton.

Various speculations have been made on the sources to which Milton has been indebted for the subject of his great poem. The extracts cited from our Cedmon, shew that this ancient poet has anticipated somewhat of the Miltonic character and agency of Satan. It is also remarkable that both Cedmon and Milton begin their poems with stating the fall of Satan, and his expulsion from Heaven. Cedmon's Paraphrase was printed by Junius, who lived much in England in 1655. Milton is said by Aubrey to have begun his Paradise Lost two years before the restoration, or in 1658. It is presumed to have been finished in 1665, and its first edition appeared in 1667. As our immortal Poet wrote the history of the Anglo-Saxon times, and in that quotes a Saxon document, the Saxon Chronicle, we may believe him to have been interested by such an important part of their literature as Cedmon's Paraphrase, which, though printed at Amsterdam, must, from the connections of Junius, who had the MSS. from Archbishop Usher, have been much known in England. Cedmon's poem is in the first part, a Paradise Lost in rude miniature. It contains the fall of the angels, the creation, the temptation of Eve, and the expulsion from Paradise. If we are to refer Milton's work to any other suggestion than to his own piety and to the scriptures, there seems much more reason to give the honour to our venerable Cedmon, than to the heterogeneous comedy of Andreini, which there is no proof that Milton ever read, and the beginning of which could only disgust his correct taste. Indeed, if we recollect our old mysteries on the same subjects, there appears still less occasion to go to Italy in search of that which we may find at home.

I have been asked, by some friends, if I intend to carry on the history of England beyond the Norman conquest. I will

frankly answer, that it is a favourite object of my wishes to do so. But the time which I can devote to literary pursuits is so contracted and so uncertain, that I can give no pledge, either for the extent of my future work or for the time of its appearance. I have advanced far enough in it to see that a rich harvest of facts may be collected by an industrious and impartial research; and I am not without hopes that I may be enabled to appropriate it. This, however, like all the projects of business and ambition, it is easier to plan than to execute. But I may indulge myself in the gratification of contemplating the task which I desire to perform. It may slowly grow up to my wishes by gradual accumulation; and if it should never reach its full maturity, still many a leisure moment will be amused by the attempt, and some things may be explored which the curiosity of the public may not be averse to examine.

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HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION.

*On the Population and History of BRITAIN before the Arrival
of the SAXONS.*

AS Philosophy has now rejected the vulgar error of antiquity, that men have, in any place, sprung fortuitously from the earth, we are satisfied that population has been every where the result of emigration from some primæval residence. We can trace, from historical documents, the colonization of many parts of the world; and the traditions of other nations sufficiently assure us, that they have been effusions from more ancient sources. Where history and tradition fail, we can discern the same kind of origin, from the impressive attestations of analogous manners and language. The most intelligent inquirers have therefore discredited the unnecessary fable of various original races, as well as of spontaneous animal vegetation. Nations have branched off from preceding nations sometimes by intentional emigration, and sometimes by accidental separation. War, commerce, want, caprice, turbulence, and pride, have each, in various regions, contributed to dis-

INTRO-
DUCTION.

Earliest in-
habitants of
Europe.

The Kimmer-
ians preced-
ed the Scy-
thians.

Ant. Ch.
680—631.

perse the human race into new settlements; and among those tribes which have frequented the sea, the casualties of the weather have often compelled undesigned colonizations. The sea coasts were probably peopled the earliest; but in time, mankind penetrated the forests and morasses of the continent, to its remotest shores.

From the concurrence of ancient history with the Mosaic accounts, we learn, that population, arts and knowledge, have originated in the East. From Asia, the human race flowed into Europe; and from the continent, passed westward into the British islands. The earliest tribes who reached the north-west and western coasts of Europe, were the Kimmerians and the Kelts.

It is the reasonable belief of the best antiquaries, that these people crossed the sea to Britain; and it seems also probable, that the Phenicians visited it.

The Kimmerians were in Europe before the Scythian tribes. We learn this important fact from the information of Herodotus, who states, apparently from the Scythians themselves, that the Kimmerians anciently possessed those regions in Europe which the Scythians were occupying in his time.¹

It cannot now be ascertained when the Kimmerians first passed out of Asia over the Bosphorus, which they named. But that they were in Europe at least seven hundred years before the Christian æra may be safely stated, because it was soon after this period that they were attacked by the Scythians in their European settlements.² On this invasion a formidable reflux of the Kimmerians into Asia occurred, from which the maritime regions of Asia Minor considerably suffered.

That part of the Kimmerian population which the Scythians disturbed was then settled in the peninsula which from them

¹ Herodot. Melpom. sec. 11. I have adopted the Greek orthography of the k, *κimmerιοι*, because it expresses the proper pronunciation of the word.

² Strabo places this event about the time

of Homer, l. 1. p. 12. p. 38. Herodotus with more precision says, that it occurred in the reign of Ardyes, son of Gyges. Clio, f. 15. Ardyes reigned from 680 to 631 years before Christ.

obtained the name of the Kimmerian Chersonesus, and in its vicinity. Their name was also retained, after their departure, in the adjoining Bosphorus, in a mountain, and in a city on the peninsula, where the isthmus was protected by a ditch and a rampart. In these parts of Europe they had possessed great power before the Scythians attacked them,³ and Herodotus says, that in his time several Kimmerian walls and ports were to be seen there.⁴

The retreat of the Kimmerians, who fled before the Scythians, has given rise to the assertion, that they conquered Asia, because what the Romans called Asia Minor was by the more ancient Greeks usually denominated Asia; but it is clear that their irruption was along the sea coast, and did not extend beyond the maritime districts.⁵ One of their chiefs who conducted it was called Lygdamis; he penetrated into Lydia and Ionia, took Sardis, and died in Cilicia. This destructive incursion, which succeeded probably because it was unexpected, has been mentioned by some Greek poets,⁶ as well as by Herodotus,⁷ Callisthines,⁸ and Strabo.⁹ They were expelled from Asia Minor by the father of Cræsus.¹⁰

When the Scythians first attacked them on the European side of their Bosphorus, the endangered tribes held a council; the chiefs and their friends wished to resist the invaders, but the others preferred a voluntary emigration. Their difference of opinion produced a battle, and the survivors abandoned their country to the Scythians.¹¹ But while one portion went under Lygdamis to Asia, the more warlike and larger part of the Kimmerian nations, according to the geographers cursorily mentioned by Plutarch,¹² receded westward from the Scythians,

³ Strabo, l. 11. p. 756, 475. Ed. Amst. 1707.

⁴ Herod. Melpom. l. 4. f. 12.

⁵ Herod. Clio, f. 15.

⁶ By Callinus in his poems, who calls them the "impetuous Kimmerians." Strab. l. 14. p. 958, and by Callimachus, Hym. in Dian. 252.

⁷ Herod. Clio, f. 6. Ib. Melpom.

⁸ Ap. Strab. p. 930.

⁹ Strab. Geog. l. 1. p. 106, et al.

¹⁰ Herod. Clio, f. 16.

¹¹ Herod. Melpom, f. 11.

¹² Plutarch in Mario.

INTRO-
DUCTION.

and proceeded to inhabit the remoter regions of Europe, extending to the German Ocean. But whether their progress to these parts was the consequence of the Scythian attack, or had preceded it, is of little importance to us to ascertain. The fact is unquestionable, that the Kimmerians anciently diffused themselves toward the German Ocean.

The history of the Kimmerians, from their leaving their eastern Bosphorus, to their reaching the Cimbric Chersonesus on the Baltic, has not been perpetuated. They are stated to have often made plundering incursions,¹³ and they were considered by Posidonius, to whose geographical works Strabo was often indebted, as a predatory and wandering nation.¹⁴

The Cimbri
were Kimme-
rians.

In the century before Cæsar they became known to the Romans by the harsher pronunciation of Cimbri,¹⁵ in that formidable irruption from which Marius rescued the Roman state. At this period a great body of them quitted their settlements on the Baltic, and, in conjunction with other tribes, entered the great Hercynian forest, which covered the largest part of ancient Germany. Repulsed by the Boioi, they descended on the Danube. They reached at last the Gauls, and the Helvetians, and then burst into Italy with a mass that had accumulated in every region they had traversed, and which was with great difficulty subdued.¹⁶ The rest of the Kimmerian nation on the continent remained in a feeble and scattered state. They are noticed by Strabo,¹⁷ and more briefly by Pliny.¹⁸

In the days of Tacitus, this ancient nation had almost ceased to exist on the continent of Europe. When he mentions those

¹³ Strabo, p. 106. This habit no doubt occasioned the word Cimbri to signify robbers among the Germans, as Plutarch remarks in Mario.

¹⁴ Posid. ap. Strab. p. 450.

¹⁵ That the *κιμμεριοι* of the Greeks were the Cimbri of the Latin writers, see Strabo, p. 450; Diod. Sic. 309; and Plut. in Mario.

¹⁶ Strabo, p. 450. The history of this invasion may be seen also in Plutarch's life of Marius.

¹⁷ He remarks, that in his time Cimbri continued to inhabit their former settlements on the Baltic, and had sent a present of one of their sacred cauldrons to Augustus, l. 7. p. 449.

¹⁸ Nat. Hist. l. 4. c. 27 and 28. The latter passage intimates Inland Cimbri near the Rhine, as well as the Cimbri in the Peninsula. In l. 6. c. 14. he mentions Cimmerii in Asia, near the Caspian.

in the peninsula of Jutland, he says, "a small state now, but
" great in glory; the marks of their ancient fame yet remain,
" far and wide, about the Elbe; by whose extent you may
" measure the power and greatness of this people, and
" accredit the reported numbers of their army."¹⁹

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At some period after the Kimmerians reached the shores of the German Ocean, a portion of them passed the sea, and settled themselves in Britain. This is not a fact recorded by the classical writers, but it is a fair inference made on these grounds. It is agreed by the British antiquaries, that the most ancient inhabitants of our island were called Cymry, (pronounced Kumri). The Welsh, who are their descendants, have always called themselves Cymry, and have given the same appellation to the earliest colonists of our island: the authorities already referred to, prove, that the *Kimmerioi* were the ancient possessors of the northern coasts of the Germanic Ocean. It is therefore a safe and reasonable inference, that the Cymry of Britain have sprung from the continental Kimmerians.²⁰

Kimmerians
and Cymry
in Britain.

The historical triads of the Welsh seem to confirm this supposition.²¹ They state that the Cymry were the first inhabitants of Britain, before whose arrival it was occupied by bears, wolves, beavers, and oxen with large protuberances.²² They

Hu Cadarn.

¹⁹ Tacitus de morib. Germ.

²⁰ Tacitus mentions a circumstance favourable to this deduction. He says of the *Cestii* on the Baltic, that their language resembled the British, "lingua Britannicæ proprior." de mor. Germ. If the opinion maintained in the text be true, the *Cestii* must have been a Kimmerian tribe.

²¹ The Welsh have several collections of historical triads; which are three events coupled together, that were thought by the collector to have some mutual analogy. It is the strange form into which their bards, or ancient writers, chose to arrange the early circumstances of their history. One of the most complete series of their triads has been printed in the *Archæology of Wales*, vol. 2. p. 57—75. It was printed from a MS. dated 1601, and the writer of it states that he had taken them out of the

books of Caradoc of Llancarvan, and of John Breckfa. Caradoc lived in the twelfth century. Breckfa was much later.

²² It may not be uninteresting to translate the whole triad. "Three names have been given to the Isle of Britain since the beginning. Before it was inhabited, it was called *Clas Merddin* (literally, the country with sea cliffs), and afterwards *Fel Ynys* (the island of honey). When government had been imposed upon it by Prydain, the son of Aedd the Great, it was called *Ynys Prydain* (the island of Prydain); and there was no tribute to any but to the race of the Cymry, because they first obtained it; and before them, there were no men alive in it, nor any thing else but bears, wolves, beavers, and the oxen with the high prominence." Triad 1. Arch. v. 2. p. 57.

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add, that Hu Cadarn, or Hu the Powerful, led the nation of the Cymry through the Hazy or German Ocean into Britain; and that the Cymry came from the eastern parts of Europe, or the regions where Constantinople now stands.²³ Though we may not chuse to trust the Welsh traditions, where they stand alone, there can be no reason for entirely rejecting them, when they coincide with the classical authorities. In the present case the agreement is striking. The Kimmerians, according to the authorities already stated, proceeded from the vicinity of the Kimmerian Bosphorus to the German Ocean; and the Welsh deduce their ancestors, the Cymry, from the regions south of the Bosphorus. The Welsh indeed add the name of their Chieftain, and that a division of the same people settled in Armorica. But if the memory of Lygdamis, who led the Kimmerian emigration to Asia, was preserved in the countries which he overran; so might the name of Hu Cadarn, who conducted some part of the western emigrations, be remembered in the island which he colonized.²⁴ That Armorica, or Bretagne, was peopled by a race of men similar to those who inhabited Britain, is verified by the close resemblance of the languages of the two countries.

Manners of
the Kimme-
rians and
Cimbri.

As we have traced the probable identity of the Cymry with the Kimmerii, and the actual identity of these with the Cimbri; it will be right to add the few circumstances, of the manners of these ancient people, which the classical writers have transmitted.

Ephorus said²⁵ of the Kimmerians, that they dwelt in subterraneous habitations, which they called argillas, communicating by trenches. It is certainly a curious analogy of language, that argel, in the language of the Cymry, or British,

²³ "The three pillars of the nation of the isle of Britain. First, Hu Gadarn, who led the nation of the Cymry first to the isle of Britain; and from the country of Summer, which is called Deffrobani, they came; this is where Constantinople is: and through the hazy ocean they

"came to the island of Britain, and to Llydaw, where they have remained." Triad. 4. p. 57.

²⁴ Pausanias has preserved the names of many of the kings of the Kelts who invaded Greece.

²⁵ Ap. Strabo, Geo. l. 5. p. 375.

means a covert, a place covered over.²⁶ He adds, that they had an oracle deep under ground.

Callimachus applies to these people the epithet horse-milkers.²⁷ The attachment to mares milk has been common to most northern nations, in their uncivilized state.

Strabo says of the Cimbri, that their wives accompanied them in war. Many hoary priestesses of the oracle followed, clothed in white linen garments, bound with a brazen girdle, and with naked feet. These women, with swords in their hands, sought the captives through the army, and threw them into a brass vessel of the size of twenty amphora. Then one of the prophetesses, ascending an elevation, stabbed them singly, as suspended above the cauldron; and made her divinations from the manner in which the blood flowed into it. The other assistants of the horrible superstition opened the bodies, and predicted victory from the inspection of the bowels. In their conflicts, they used a species of immense drum; for they struck upon skins stretched over their war-chariots, which emitted a very powerful sound.²⁸ This description of Strabo, of the warlike customs of the Cimbri, leads us to recollect some analogous passages of Tacitus concerning the Britons. He describes women, with firebrands in their hands, running like furies among the army of the Britons in Anglesey. He adds, that they stained their altars with the blood of their captives; and consulted their gods by the fibres of men. He mentions also, that before their destruction of the colony at Camelodunum, "Women, agitated with the prophetic fury, sang its approaching ruin."²⁹

²⁶ The word occurs in the ancient Welsh poetry, as in the *Afallenau* of *Merddhin*,
a dyf yn argel yn argoedydd,
will come in the covert in the lofty woods.
1 W. *Archaiol*. 152.

It is also used in the *Englynion* *Beddau* of *Taliessin*:

Bet *Llia Gwitel* in argel *ardudwy*
dan y guellt ac guevel.

The Grave of *Llia* the *Gwyddelian* in the
covert of *Arduwy*,
under the grass and withered leaves.

1 *Archaiol*, p. 80.

²⁷ *Callim.* *Hym.* in *Dian*, v. 252.

²⁸ *Strabo*, l. 7. p. 451.

²⁹ *Tacitus Annal.* l. 14. *Stabat pro litore*
diversa acies, densa armis virisque inter-
cursantibus feminis, in modum furiarum,

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The Kelts

sprang from
Kimmerians.

But upon investigating the remains of antiquity, we find another ancient people, placed in some of the western regions of Europe, at the time when Greek history begins. They were called Κελτοί, and afterwards Γαλαται; and Cæsar says of them, that they called themselves Celtæ, though the Romans gave them the appellation of Galli.³⁰

The Keltoi, to follow the Greek orthography of the word, appear to have been one of the branches of the Kimmerian stock. The term Kimmerian, like German, or Gaul, was a generic appellation. The people to whom it extended, had also specific denominations. Thus, part of the Kimmerians who invaded Asia, under Lygdamis, were likewise called Trerones, or Treres.³¹ That the Kelts were Kimmerians is expressly affirmed by Arrian in two passages;³² and is implied by Diodorus,³³ and Plutarch.³⁴

The Kimmerians traversed the north of Europe, from East to West, and the Kelts seem to have proceeded more to the South and West. Some geographers, before Plutarch, extended the country of the Kelts as far as the sea of Azoph.³⁵ Ephorus was probably one of these; for he is not only mentioned to have made Keltica of vast magnitude, and including much of Spain;³⁶ but he likewise divided the world into four parts, and made the Kelts to inhabit one of the four towards the West.³⁷ This statement seems extravagant; but it leads us to infer, that the Kelts had been considered to be an

veste ferali, crinibus dejectis faces preferabant—Nam cruore captivo adolere aras et hominum fibris consulere deos fas habebant—Et feminae in furore turbatae, adesse exitium canebant.

³⁰ Cæsar. Comment. de bell. Gall. l. 1. f. 1. Pausanias says of these people, "they have but lately called themselves γαλαται." "They anciently called themselves κελτοί, and so did others," p. 6. And that γαλαται was but another appellation of the κελτοί, see Diod. Sic. l. 5. p. 308. ed. Hanov. 1604. Galatai seems to be only a more euphonous

pronunciation of Keltoi; and Galli is probably but the abbreviation of Galatai.

³¹ Strabo, l. 1. p. 106. In another place he says, Magnetus was utterly destroyed by the Treres, a Kimmerian nation, l. 14. p. 958.

³² Appian in Illyr. p. 1196, and de bell. civ. l. 1. p. 625.

³³ Diod. Sic. l. 5. p. 309.

³⁴ Plut. in Mario.

³⁵ Plut. in Mario.

³⁶ Strabo, l. 4. p. 304.

³⁷ Strabo, l. 1. p. 59.

extensive people;³⁸ which indeed the various notices about them, scattered in the writings of the ancients, sufficiently testify.

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In the time of Herodotus, the Kelts were withdrawing to the western coasts of Europe. He says, that they inhabited the remotest parts of Europe to the West;³⁹ and in another part, he states them to live beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and about Pyrrhene; and he places among them the origin of the Danube.⁴⁰

The Kelts in
the West of
Europe.

Aristotle frequently mentions the Kelts. In one place, he notices them as neither dreading earthquakes, nor inundations;⁴¹ in another, as rushing armed into the waves;⁴² and in another, as plunging their new-born infants in cold water, or clothing them in scanty garments.⁴³ In other works attributed to him, he speaks of the British islands as lying above the Kelts;⁴⁴ he mentions Pyrene as a mountain towards the West in Keltica, from which the Danube and the Tartessus flow; the latter north of the columns of Hercules; the former passing through Europe into the Euxine.⁴⁵ He elsewhere speaks of Keltica, and the Iberians.⁴⁶

The tendency of these notices of the Kelts, by Herodotus, Aristotle, and Ephorus, is to shew, that in their times, this people lived in the western parts of Europe, about Gaul and Spain. They are spoken of as being in the same places by later writers.⁴⁷ But the evidence of Cæsar is particularly interesting on this subject. In his time the German or Scythic hordes had spread themselves over Europe, and had incorporated, or driven before them the more ancient races, whom we

³⁸ Ephorus was a disciple of Isocrates, who desired him to write a history (Photius 1455), which he composed from the return of the Heraclidæ into the Peloponnese to the twentieth year of Philip of Macedon. It obtained him a distinguished reputation. His geography is often mentioned, and sometimes criticised by Strabo.

³⁹ Herod. Melpom. c. 49.

⁴⁰ Herod. Euterpe. c. 33.

⁴¹ Arist. ηθικων Νικομ. l. 3. c. 10.

⁴² Arist. ηθικ. Ευδημ. l. 3. c. 1.

⁴³ Arist. Πολιτ. l. 7. c. 17.

⁴⁴ De Mundo, c. 3. p. 552.

⁴⁵ Meteor. l. 1. c. 12.

⁴⁶ De Mirab. Auscult. 1157.

⁴⁷ As Pausanias, p. 62. Diod. Sic. p. 308; and Strabo in many places.

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have been describing. But he found the Kelts possessing, at the period of his entrance into Gaul, the most considerable, and the best maritime part of it. He mentions that the Seine and the Marne separated them from the Belgæ, and the Garonne from the Aquitani.⁴⁸ But if the Kelts occupied the sea coast of France, from the Seine to the Garonne, and had been driven to the Seine by the invasions of northern assailants, they were in a position extremely favourable for passing over into Britain; and had been under the same circumstances to impel them to it, which afterwards drove the Britons to seek refuge on a part of their coast, when the Saxons pressed upon them.

The Kelts.
enter Britain.

The Kelts had certainly been much spread upon the continent, in the times anterior to Cæsar. We find traces of them in so many parts of Europe; in Italy, on the Adriatic, in Thrace, and Illyria, and in Germany; we see the power and numbers of their tribes, so strikingly displayed in their formidable invasion of Greece, in the third century, which Pausanias,⁴⁹ and others, have described; and in the preceding age, in that irruption on Rome, from which Camillus with difficulty saved the endangered Capitol; that it is one of our most warrantable inferences to presume, that as the Gothic tribes pressed and scattered them to the west and south of Europe, some of their people sought settlements elsewhere. That they adventured into other regions, their expeditions to Rome, Greece, and Asia, sufficiently prove; and, considering the vicinity and fertility of Britain, we cannot avoid believing, that they crossed the sea to colonize it.

That colonies of Keltic race entered the British islands from Gaul, has always appeared to our antiquaries so probable, that there is scarcely any circumstance on which they have so cordially agreed. The Welsh tradition may be therefore read without incredulity, which deduces two colonies from

⁴⁸ Cæsar. Comment. de bell. Gall. l. 1. c. 1.

⁴⁹ Pausan. Attic. l. 1. p. 6—8; and Phocic. l. 10. p. 643—655.

Gaul, not Cymry, or Kimmerians, but of Kimmerian origin; the one from Armorica, and the other from Gascony.⁵⁰ The distinction taken as to their origin suits the situation of the Kelts, who, to use the expression of the triad, were of the first race of the Cymry. The Armorican emigration was of the tribe called Brython,⁵¹ a name which recalls to our recollection, that Pliny found a people called Britanni remaining in Gaul in his time.⁵² The colony from Gascony was the Lloegrwys, whose name became attached to that part of the island which they occupied; the largest part of England having been always named Lloegr by the Welsh poets⁵³ and chroniclers.⁵⁴ Tacitus expresses his belief, that the Gauls peopled Britain,⁵⁵ and Bede derives its inhabitants from Armorica.⁵⁶

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But though the Kimmerii, and their kindred the Kelts, may have peopled Britain, a more celebrated people are also said to have visited it. The Phenicians, in their extensive commercial navigations, colonized many of the islands, and some of the coasts of the Ægean and Mediterranean Seas. They had also an established intercourse with islands, which the Greeks called

Phenicians in
Britain. The
Cassiterides.

⁵⁰ The fifth triad is this: "The three peaceful people of the isle of Britain. The first were the nation of the Cymry, who came with Hu Cadarn to the island of Britain. He obtained not the country, nor the lands, by slaughter or contest, but with justice, and peace. The other was the race of the Lloegrwys, who came from the land of Gwasgwyn; and they were of the first race of the Cymry. The third were the Brython, and from the land of Llydaw they came; and they were of the first race of the Cymry. And these were called the three peaceful nations, because they came one to the other with peace and tranquillity; and these three nations were of the first race of the Cymry, and they were of the same language." *Trioedd ynys Prydain*, 2 *Archaiol*. p. 58.

⁵¹ The Brython are frequently mentioned by the old Welsh poets: By Aneurin, in his *Gododin*, 1 *Archaiol*. p. 10, and by Taliessin,

p. 31, 50, 66, 67, 73. He once mentions the Morini Brython, in his *Prif Gysfarch*, or *Primary Gratulation*, p. 33.

⁵² Pliny *Hist. Nat.* l. 4. c. 31; and Dionysius.

⁵³ Aneurin speaks of Lloegr. p. 7, and calls its inhabitants Lloegrwys, p. 4, 9, and 11. Taliessin has Lloegr, p. 64 and 59, and Lloegrwys, p. 51, 55. Llywarch Hen and Myrddhin also use both words, as 108, 117, 153, &c.

⁵⁴ Besides the fabulous Brut Tysilio, and the Brut ab Arthur, 2 *Archaiol*. p. 116, 117, their historical chronicles Brut y Saeson, and the Brut y Tywysogion, p. 469, 471, &c. speak of England under this name.

⁵⁵ Tacitus *Vit. Agric.* In Camden's *Britannia* numerous analogies of manners and language between the Britons and Gauls are collected, to prove their identity of origin.

⁵⁶ Bede *Hist. Eccl.* l. 1. c. 1.

“ the Islands of Tin,” or Cassiterides. This, being a descriptive name, was probably the translation of the Phenician appellation.⁵⁷ As Herodotus intimates, that the Cassiterides were, with respect to Greece, in the farthest part of Europe;⁵⁸ as Aristotle talks of *Keltic* tin;⁵⁹ and Strabo describes both these islands and Britain to be opposite to the Artabri, or Gallicia in Spain, but northward, and places them within the British climate;⁶⁰ as in another passage he states them to be without, or on our side of the columns of Hercules;⁶¹ as he mentions them to be productive of tin, obviously connecting them at the same time with the British islands;⁶² and in another part, as being in the open sea, north from the port of the Artabri,⁶³ or Gallicia; the most learned, both at home and abroad, have believed the Cassiterides to have been some of the British islands. This opinion is warranted by there being no other islands famous for tin near the parts designated by Strabo; and by the fact, that British tin was so celebrated in antiquity, that Polybius intended to write on the British islands, and the preparation of tin.⁶⁴

It has been suggested, that the Scilly islands and Cornwall were more peculiarly meant by the Cassiterides. When Cornwall was first discovered from the south of Europe, it may have been thought an island, before greater familiarity with the coast taught the navigators that it was only a pro-

⁵⁷ *Κασσιτερος* is the word used by the Greeks for tin. Bochart has founded an ingenious etymology of the “Britannic islands” on the Hebrew *ברת-אנך*, *Baratanac*, which means the Land of Tin. He says Strabo calls Britain, *Βρετανικη*. *Boch. Canaan*, l. 1. c. 39, p. 720. He also intimates, what is very probable, that the word *Κασσιτερος* may have been of Phenician origin. The Chaldean Targums call it *kastira* and *kistara*, and the Arabs *kasdir*. See Numbers xxxi. v. 22.

⁵⁸ Herod. *Thalia*. c. 115.

⁵⁹ Aristot. lib. *Mirabilium*; and Mela places the Cassiterides in Celtis, or among the Keltæ, l. 3. c. 6. p. 262.

⁶⁰ Strabo *Geog.* l. 2. p. 181.

⁶¹ Strabo *Geog.* l. 2. p. 191. He joins them with the British islands, *καὶ Κασιτερίδες, καὶ Βρετανικαί*.

⁶² *Ib.* l. 3. p. 219. Here he says, that tin is produced among the barbarians above Lusitania and in the islands Cassiterides, and from Britain is brought to Marseilles.

⁶³ *Ib.* l. 3. p. 265. In this passage Strabo says likewise, they are ten in number, adjoining each other.

⁶⁴ Polyb. *Hist.* l. 3. c. 5. Festus Avienus describes islands under the name of *Æstrymnides*, which are thought to be the same with Strabo's Cassiterides. He says they were frequented by the merchants of Tartessus and Carthage, and were rich in tin and lead. *De oris Marit.*

jecting part of a larger country; and even then, when the whole country connected with it, was found to be an island, there was no reason to change its insular appellation. In our navigations to the Pacific, new discovered places have been at first marked as islands, which were afterwards traced to be parts of a continent; and others have been deemed continental, which have been discovered to be insular.⁶⁵

Much of the false description with which the position of the Cassiterides has been confused, may have been designedly circulated by the Phenicians themselves. We know from Strabo, that they were anxious to deprive the rest of the world of any acquaintance with these islands. He has told us a very striking incident of this monopolizing solicitude, which must have been the parent of many misrepresentations about Britain, till the Romans subdued and examined it. He says, “anciently the Phœnicians alone, from Cadiz, engrossed this market; hiding the navigation from all others. When the Romans followed the course of a vessel, that they might discover the situation, the jealous pilot wilfully stranded his ship; misleading those, who were tracing him, to the same destruction. Escaping from the shipwreck, he was indemnified for his losses out of the public treasury.”⁶⁶ When Cæsar invaded Britain, we know from his Commentaries, that he was unacquainted with its magnitude, its harbours, or its people. It was even doubted whether it was a continent or an island.⁶⁷ Of course the Romans at that time could have known nothing of the connection and continuance of coast between Cornwall and Dover. This ignorance of other nations, and the designed misinformation given by the Phenicians,

⁶⁵ The reasons for supposing the Cassiterides to be the Scilly islands, are thus stated in Camden's Britannia. They are opposite to the Artabri in Spain; they bend directly to the north from them; they lie in the same clime with Britain; they look towards Celtiberia; the sea is much broader between them and Spain, than between them and Britain; they lie just

upon the Iberian sea; there are only ten of them of any note, and they have veins of tin which no other isle has in this tract. Camd. Brit. p. 1112. Ed. 1695. All these circumstances have been mentioned of the Cassiterides.

⁶⁶ Strabo, l. 3. p. 265.

⁶⁷ Dio Cass. l. 39. p. 127. Cæsar. Comm. de bell. Gall. l. 4. f. 18.

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may have occasioned the distinction to have been taken between the Cassiterides and Britain, and a supposition, favoured by Strabo, that some sea intervened.⁶⁸ The Cassiterides had become imperfectly known to the Romans, in the time of Strabo, by the attempt of Publius Crassus⁶⁹ to discover them. He seems to have landed at one of them, but the short account given of his voyage does not incline us to believe that he completely explored them.⁷⁰

If we once presume that the Phenicians reached the Scilly islands, and extracted tin from them, we shall do great injustice to their memory to suppose that they, who could sail from Tyre to the Scilly islands, would not have adventured across the small sea between them and the Land's end. Indeed we know that the Carthaginians, the offspring of Tyre, pursued voyages even more northward than Britain, unless the navigation of Himilco be a fable.⁷¹ We may therefore admit, without much chance of error, that the Cassiterides visited by the Phenicians were the British islands, though the Romans understood by the name the Islands of Scilly, with perhaps part of the coast of Cornwall.⁷²

Welsh tra-
ditions.

Having thus stated the most authentic circumstances that can be now collected, of the peopling Britain by the Kimmerians, the Keltoi, and the Phenicians; it may not be improper to state in one view, all that the Welsh traditions deliver of the ancient inhabitants of the island. How far individuals may chuse to accredit them, is a matter for their own discre-

⁶⁸ Solinus says, that a turbid sea divided the Scilly isle (Siluram) from Britain, Polyhist. c. 22. p. 31. The distance is near forty miles. Whit. Manch. 2. p. 172. 8°.

⁶⁹ Strabo. l. 3. p. 265. Huet thinks this was not the Crassus who perished against the Parthians, though he had fought in Portugal and triumphed in Spain; but his son, who was Cæsar's lieutenant in his Gallic wars, and who subdued the people of Vannes and its vicinity. He may have undertaken the voyage from curiosity, as Volusenus by Cæsar's orders examined part of the sea coasts of our island for military purposes.

Hist. de Com. des Anciens, c. 38. p. 183. ed. Par. 1727.

⁷⁰ Whitaker's description of the present state of the Scilly islands is worth reading. Hist. Manch. 2. p. 169. Though the same chapter in other parts discovers a fancy painting far beyond the facts in the authorities.

⁷¹ Pliny, l. 2. c. 67.

⁷² Pliny has preserved the name of the Phenician navigator who first procured lead from the Cassiterides. He says, *Plumbum ex Cassiteride insula primus apportavit Midacritus*. Hist. Nat. l. 7. c. 57.

tion to determine. But in the mean time, they ought to be preserved from absolute oblivion.

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According to the Welsh triads, while it was uninhabited by human colonies, and was full of bears, wolves, beavers, and a peculiar kind of wild cattle, it had the name of Clas Merddhin.⁷³ In this state, Hy Cadarn led the first colony of the Cymry to it, of whom some went to Bretagne.⁷⁴ It then acquired the name of the Honey Island.⁷⁵ In the course of time Prydain, the son of Aedd the Great, reigned in it, and from him it was called Ynys Prydain, the Isle of Prydain,⁷⁶ which is its present denomination in Welsh, and which the Greeks and Romans seem to have extended into Britannia. It was afterwards visited by two foreign tribes of Kimmerian origin, the Lloegrwys, from Gwasgwyn, or Gascony; and the Brython, from Llydaw, or Bretagne.⁷⁷ Both of these were peaceable colonists. The Lloegrwys impressed their name upon a large portion of the island. At subsequent periods, other people have come with more or less violence. The Romans;⁷⁸ the Gwyddyl Fficti (the Picts) to Alban or Scotland, on the part which lies nearest to the Baltic;⁷⁹ the Celyddon (Caledonians) to the north parts of the island;⁸⁰ the Gwyddyl to other parts of Scotland;⁸¹ the Corraniaid from Pwyll (perhaps Poland) to the Humber;⁸² the Men of Galedin, or Flanders, to Wyth;⁸³ the Saxons;⁸⁴ and the Llychlynians, or Northmen.⁸⁵

As the prosperity of the Phenicians declined, under the hostilities of the ancient conquerors, who emerged from Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, their descendants, the Carthaginians, succeeded to the possession of their European settlements; and in some places, as in Spain, and Sicily, greatly extended their territorial power. Hence, there is no reason to

Carthaginians acquainted with Britain.

⁷³ Trioedd 1. ⁷⁴ Ib. 4 and 5. ⁷⁵ Ib. 1.
⁷⁶ Ib. 1. Isidorus says, that Britain derived its name from a word of its inhabitants.
⁷⁷ Ib. 5.

⁷⁸ Trioedd 8. ⁷⁹ Ib. 7. ⁸⁰ Ib. 6. ⁸¹ Ib. 7.
⁸² Ib. 6. ⁸³ Ib. 8.

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disbelieve the opinion, that the Carthaginians had the same intercourse with the British islands, which the Phenicians established. The voyage of Himilco warrants the supposition. This Carthaginian officer sailed from Spain, on a voyage of discovery of the northern coasts of Europe, at the same time that Hanno was directed to circumnavigate Africa.⁸⁴

Britain
known to the
Greeks.

That Britain and Ireland were known to the Greeks, is an unquestionable fact. The ancient Argonautica, ascribed to Orpheus, but of much later origin,⁸⁵ describes the voyage of the Argonauts, on their return to Greece. In this curious work, they are made to sail round the north of Europe, from the Kimmerian Bosphorus. In coming southward, the author says "they passed by the island Iernida."⁸⁶ Whether the next island they noticed, which is described as full of pinetrees, was any part of Britain, cannot be ascertained. As this work, if not written in the time of Pisistratus, which many assert it to have been, is at least of great antiquity;⁸⁷ it is an evidence that Ireland was known to the ancient Greeks.

In the book de Mundo, which is ascribed to Aristotle, the British islands are mentioned, with their specific names, Albion and Ierne.

The voyage of Pytheas, which was in existence in the fifth century,⁸⁸ must have transmitted much information to the

⁸⁴ Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 2. c. 67.

⁸⁵ Suidas says, the Argonautica was written by an Orpheus of Crotona, whom Asclepiades, in the sixth book of his Grammaticæ, declared to be the friend of Pisistratus, vol. 2, p. 339. Some other works, published under the name of Orpheus, he attributes to Onomacritus, ib. 338.

⁸⁶ *Αργοναυτικά*, v. 1179. p. 156. ed. Lips. 1764. Strabo, l. 4. p. 307, calls Ireland *Ιερν*, and Diodorus Siculus gives it a name that approaches very near its native appellation. Its name in the Gaelic is Erin; in Diodorus it is *Ιερν*, l. 5. p. 309.

⁸⁷ The antiquity of the *αργοναυτικά* has been ably vindicated by D. Ruhnkenius.

He shews that it was quoted by two ancient grammarians, Orus and Draco Stratonicensis. He gives his own critical judgment of their antiquity in strong terms: "Is, qui Argonautica et Hymnos Orpheo subjecit, sive Onomacritus fuerit, ut plures traducit, sive alius, scriptor certe meo judicio *Vetustissimus* est; in quo quamvis animus diligenter attenderim ne levissimum quidem recentioris ætatis vestigium reperi, contra, proba omnia et antiquitatem redolentia." Epist. Crit. 2. p. 128. ed. 1782.

⁸⁸ He is quoted by Stephanus, Voc. *πυθαίης*, who lived at this period.

Greeks, concerning our islands. He seems to have lived about the time of Aristotle.⁸⁹ He sailed from Marseilles, where he made an observation to determine its latitude, which enabled Eratosthenes and Hipparchus to calculate it with a precision which modern astronomers have found exact.⁹⁰ He coasted Spain, Portugal, and France, into the British Channel. He passed along the eastern shore of Britain, to the north, till he reached the island which he has called Thule. After this, he made a voyage to the German Ocean; passed the Sound into the Baltic Sea, and sailed on to a river, which he thought the Tanais, the boundary of Europe.⁹¹ In all his course, he made many observations on the climate, the people, and the productions of the countries he visited, of which only a very few fragments have descended to us; and it is evident, from what has been transmitted to us of his opinions, that Britain was a principal object of his examination.⁹²

In the third book of his history, Polybius has intimated that the British islands, and the manner of making tin, would be one of his subjects for a future composition.⁹³ His friend, the great Scipio, made inquiries concerning Britain,⁹⁴ of the merchants of Narbonne and Marseilles; but though he could obtain, from their ignorance or their jealousy, nothing worthy of memory, yet, as Polybius mentions that many authors before him had treated fully, though variously, on this and the other subjects which he postpones; and as he himself had travelled through Spain and Gaul, and had sailed over the ocean which bounds them;⁹⁵ the remarks of an author, so

⁸⁹ See M. Bougainville's very able Memoir on his Life and Voyages. Mem. Ac. des Inscript. v. 30. p. 285.

⁹⁰ Bougainville, p. 289. Pytheas referred the cause of the tides to the agency of the moon. Plut. de placit. Phil. His description of the stars in the north was cited with approbation by Hipparchus, in his Commentary on Aratus. Bougain. ib.

⁹¹ Bougainville has collected the passages from Pytheas' voyage, in Strabo and Pliny, which express these circumstances; and has

vindicated him from the angry invectives of Strabo, who, though occasionally erring himself, is very unsparing in his censure of Pytheas.

⁹² See Pliny, l. 2. c. 77. & c. 99; l. 4. c. 27 & c. 30; and Strabo in several places. Pytheas has had a singular fortune: he has been attacked by Strabo and Polybius; and followed by Eratosthenes and Hipparchus.

⁹³ Hist. l. 3. c. 5.

⁹⁴ Strabo, l. 4. p. 289.

⁹⁵ Polybius, l. 3. c. 5.

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inquisitive and judicious, would have been an invaluable present to our curiosity. If they were ever written,⁹⁶ time has deprived us of them. We have equally lost the works of Timæus, Isidorus, Artemidorus, Messenius, Eratosthenes, Hipparchus, and Posidonius, who are all mentioned to have noticed the British islands.⁹⁷

The ambition of Cæsar, which led him, after conflicting with all the nations of Gaul, to attempt the subjection of Britain, because warlike fame was the surest introduction to political power at Rome, first made the Romans well acquainted with Britain. His fleet explored a part of its coast, and his land-forces twice penetrated into the island.⁹⁸

Manners of
the Britons.

When Britain was invaded by the Romans, its inhabitants were divided into many tribes, under distinct and independant chieftains, and, like all barbarous nations, were perpetually engaged in civil feuds.⁹⁹ Their manners display a state of society not more advanced in civilization than that which prevails in the islands of the Pacific. They stained themselves with woad, which gave them a horrible appearance in battle,¹ and some painted or cut on their skins the figures of animals.² They wore their hair long, but shaved all parts of their bodies except the head and upper lip.³ On the middle finger they wore a ring,⁴ and the better sort had golden chains or circles round their necks. The garment of one of their queens, who wore one of these golden ornaments, is described as of many colours.⁵ The Britons of the interior clothed themselves in skins, and most of them lived on milk and flesh. Others were agricultural.⁶

⁹⁶ In speaking of the British islands, Polybius rather expresses a treatise which he had it in his contemplation to compose, than one which he had made. From this passage, it is not certain, whether he fulfilled his intentions; and yet some allusions of Strabo seem to have been taken from such a work.

⁹⁷ Pliny, l. 4. c. 30. Strabo, l. 2. p. 163; l. 4. p. 304; l. 1. p. 111. We find from Tacitus, Vit. Agr. that Livy and Fabius

Rusticus, "eloquentissimi auctores," had treated of Britain before him.

⁹⁸ Cæsar's Comment. l. 4 & 5.

⁹⁹ Tacit. Vit. Agric. Mela, l. 3. c. 6.

¹ Cæsar de bell. Gall. l. 5. c. 10. Mela, l. 3. c. 6. Hence Martial calls them 'Cæruleis Britannis,' l. 11. c. 32.

² Herodian, l. 3. p. 83. Solinus, c. 22.

³ Cæsar, l. 5. c. 10.

⁴ Pliny, l. 33. c. 6.

⁵ Xiphelin, ep. Dion. p. 169.

⁶ Cæsar, l. 5. c. 10.

Their houses, chiefly formed of reeds or wood, were very numerous, like those of the Gauls, and were usually seated in the midst of woods, perhaps for better defence, as those of the New Zealanders are, for the same reason, placed on fortified hills. The wars of savages usually consist of attempts to surprise and ravage; and therefore precautions against sudden aggressions are the most essential parts of their defensive skill. The Britons seem to have cleared a space in the wood, on which they built their huts and folded their cattle; and they fenced the avenues by ditches and barriers of trees. Such a collection of houses formed one of their towns.⁷

Their population was very numerous, and they had great quantities of cattle.⁸ Some of the British tribes are said not to have had the art of making cheese, though they had abundance of milk; others knew nothing of either agriculture or gardening.⁹ They housed their corn in the ear, in subterraneous places, and threshed out no more than served them for the day.¹⁰ Their money was of the Spartan kind; it was either copper, or of iron rings, of a definite weight. They thought it a crime to eat hares, geese, or hens, though they bred them for pleasure.¹¹ One of their most extraordinary and pernicious customs was, that community of women among ten or twelve men, who chose to form such an association, which reminds us of the profligate Arreoyoys of Otaheite. The British Arreoyoys, however, seem not to have destroyed their children; as these were agreed to be considered as the offspring of the man who had married the mother.¹²

In battle their chief strength was in their infantry.¹³ But they fought also on horses, and more especially in chariots, with scythes at the axles.¹⁴ In these they rode, throwing darts on every side; and, by the dread of the horses, and the noise

⁷ Strabo, l. 4. p. 306. Cæsar, l. 5. c. 17.
Diod. Sic. l. 5. p. 301.

⁸ Cæsar, l. 5. c. 10.

⁹ Strabo, l. 4. p. 305.

¹⁰ Diod. l. 5. p. 301.

¹¹ Cæsar, l. 5. c. 10.

¹² Ib.

¹³ Tacitus.

¹⁴ Mela, l. 3. c. 6.

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of the wheels, they often disordered their opponents. When they had broken in among the horse, they leaped from the cars, and fought on foot. The drivers retired a little out of the battle, but so stationed themselves, as to be ready to receive the combatants if pressed by the enemy. Thus, to the activity of cavalry, they united the steadiness of infantry. By daily use and practice, they were so expert, that they could stop their horses at full speed down a declivity, could guide and turn them, run along the beam, stand on the yoke, and from thence, with rapidity, dart into their chariots.¹⁵ Diodorus, in mentioning the British war chariots, recalls to our mind, that the heroes of the Trojan war used them likewise;¹⁶ there was however this difference, that among the Britons the driver was the superior person.¹⁷

Their reli-
gion.

The religion of the Britons was of a fierce and sanguinary nature. It resembled that of the Gauls, which is thus described. They who were afflicted with severe disease, or involved in dangers or battles, sacrificed men for victims, or devoted themselves to be sacrificed. The Druids administered at these gloomy rites. They thought that the life of a man was to be redeemed by a man's life; and that there was no other mode of conciliating their gods. Some made images of wicker work of an immense size, and filled them with living men, whom they burned alive. Thieves and robbers, or other criminals, were usually made the victims; but if there were a deficiency of these, the guiltless were sacrificed.¹⁸ At some of their sacred rites the British women went naked, but stained dark, like Ethiopians, by a vegetable juice.¹⁹ That they consulted their gods on futurity, by inspecting the quivering flesh of their human victims, and that they had prophetic women, has been already mentioned.²⁰

¹⁵ Caesar, l. 4. c. 29.

¹⁶ Diod. l. 5. c. 301.

¹⁷ *Honestior auriga; clientes propugnant.* Tacit. Vit. Agr.

¹⁸ Caesar, l. 6. c. 15.

¹⁹ Pliny, l. 22. c. 2.

²⁰ See before, p. 7.

Their superstitious fancies deemed the misseltoe sacred, if it vegetated from the oak. They selected groves of oaks, and thought every thing sent from heaven which grew on this tree. On the sixth day of the moon, which was the beginning of their months and years, and of their period of thirty years, they came to the oak on which they observed any of the parasitical plant (which they called all-healing), prepared a sacrifice and a feast under this venerated tree, and brought thither two white bulls, whose horns were then first tied. The officiating Druid, in a white garment, climbed the tree, and, with a golden knife, pruned off the misseltoe, which was received in a white woollen cloth below. They then sacrificed the victims, and addressed their gods to make it prosperous to those to whom it was given; for they believed that it gave fecundity, and was an amulet against poison. They performed no ceremonies without the leaves of the oak.²¹

The ancient world, including the most enlightened nations, even Greece and Rome, were universally impressed with a belief of the powers of magic. But the expressions of Pliny induce us to imagine, that this mischievous imposture was peculiarly cultivated by the British Druids. He says, "Britain now celebrates it so astonishingly, and with so many ceremonies, that she might even be thought to have given it to the Persians."²² The Druids were indeed so superior in knowledge and intellect to the rest of the nation, that their magical frauds must have been easily invented and securely practised.

The Druidical system began in Britain, and from thence was introduced into Gaul. In Cæsar's time, they who wished to know it more diligently, for the most part visited Britain, for the sake of learning it. The Druids were present at all

Their Druids.

²¹ Pliny, l. 16. c. 95. As derw is British for an oak, and derwydd is the term for a druid in the same language, it is probable that this class of persons was named from the tree they venerated.

²² Pliny, l. 30. c. 4. The Welsh term for right-hand, seems to have some reference

to the ancient superstitions of the Britons. It is deheulaw, or the south-hand; an expression which can only be true, when we look at the East. The circles at Stonehenge seem to have a reference to the rising of the sun at the solstice.

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religious rites; they administered at public and private sacrifices; and they interpreted divinations. They were so honoured, that they decided almost all public and private controversies, and all causes, whether of homicide, inheritance, or boundaries. They appointed the remunerations, and the punishments. Whoever disobeyed their decree, was interdicted from their sacrifices, which with them was the severest punishment. An interdicted person was deemed both impious and wicked; all fled from him, and avoided his presence and conversation, lest they should be contaminated by the intercourse. He was allowed no legal rights. He participated in no honours.

The Druids obeyed one chief, who had supreme authority over them. At his death, he was succeeded by the next in dignity. If others had equal pretences, the suffrages of the Druids decided it; and sometimes arms determined the competition.²³

The Druids had great privileges. They neither paid taxes, nor engaged in war. They were allowed exemption from warfare and all other things. Excited by such advantages, many voluntarily submitted to the discipline, and others were sent by their friends and relations. They were said to learn a great number of verses there; so that some remained twenty years under the education. They conceived it not lawful to commit their knowledge to writing, though in all other things they used Greek characters. Cæsar adds, that a great number of youth resorted to them for education.

They taught that souls never perished; but passed at death into other bodies; and as this opinion removed the fear of death, they thought that it excited strongly to virtue. They discussed and taught also many things concerning the stars, and their motion; the size of the world, and its countries; the nature of things; and the force and power of the immortal

²³ Cæsar.

Gods.²⁴ Such subjects of contemplation and tuition as these, shew a knowledge and an exerted intellect, that could not have been the natural growth of a people so barbarous as the Britons and Gauls. They must have derived both the information and the habit from more civilized regions. The Druidical order consisted of three sorts of men; Druids, Bards, and Ouates. The Bards were the poets and musicians, of whom some were satyrists, and some encomiasts. The Ouates sacrificed, divined, and contemplated the nature of things. The Druids cultivated physiology and moral philosophy; or, as Diodorus says, were their philosophers and theologians.²⁵

Of the Druidical superstitions, we have no monuments remaining, unless the circles of stones, which are to be seen in some parts of the island, are deemed their temples. Of all the suppositions concerning Stonehenge and Avebury, it seems the most rational to ascribe them to the Druidical order; and of this system we may remark, that if it was the creature of a more civilized people, none of the colonizers of Britain are so likely to have been its parents, as the Phenicians and Carthaginians.²⁶

Such were the Britons whom Cæsar invaded. He twice attacked the island. His struggles ended in the defeat of the Britons in the field engagements; and, satisfied with unproductive victory, he left Britain without making any settlement. That Cæsar did not conquer the island, is unquestionable; but that he must have conquered it, if he had applied as much of his time and forces to this object, as he used against Gaul, cannot be doubted by any who consider the invariable superiority of military skill and habitual discipline over barbarian courage.

Roman invasion.

²⁴ Cæsar, l. 6. c. 13. Mela, l. 3. c. 20; and see Lucan's celebrated verses on their theory of transmigration.

²⁵ Diod. Sicul. l. 5. p. 308. Strabo, l. 4. p. 302.

²⁶ Syria, Phenicia, and Palestine abound with many solid rocks and stony mountains

cut into shapes, and excavated into chambers, and with erections of stones for the purposes of superstition. Mr. Watts' Views in Syria and Palestine, from the drawings in Sir Robert Ainslie's collection, exhibit some curious remains of this sort.

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The Britons remained unmolested by the Romans for nearly a century after Cæsar. This interval was occupied by those petty internal wars which uncivilized people cannot exist without prosecuting, though by these they destroy the few miserable comforts which savage life possesses. These conflicts occasioned changes in the independence of some of their tribes.

A. C. 43.

In the reign of Claudius, the Romans resolved on the conquest of Britain. Aulus Plautius conducted them into it, accompanied by Vespasian, and other officers of celebrity. A series of desperate conflicts followed. The Britons met their invaders with perpetual intrepidity; and the progress of the Romans was slow. But as they persevered in their attempt, with frequent supplies of new troops, and as the British states fought with their separate strength, without mutual concert and co-operation, the conquest of the island was progressively effected.²⁷

A. C. 61.

Boadicea attempted to emancipate her country. Her first efforts were as successful as they were sanguinary. But when the Roman general had collected his forces, and engaged the exulting and too confident Britons, in a pitched battle, a destructive and decisive defeat terminated the revolt;²⁸ and left the Romans in the quiet possession of that part of the island which was then called Lloegr by the natives, and which, from the future conquest of the Saxons, received the name of England.

A. C. 78.

Agricola subdued that part of Wales in which the Britons were resisting the Romans; and, in several campaigns, carried

A. C. 121.

his arms far into Scotland.²⁹ The Emperor Hadrian, at a subsequent period, visited Britain; and ordered the construction of a military work, from the mouth of the Tine to the Solway firth, as the boundary of the Roman provinces in Britain. In the next reign, of Antoninus Pius, the Romans

²⁷ Dio. Cass. l. 60. Tacit. Ann. l. 12.²⁸ Tacit. Ann. l. 14.²⁹ See Tacitus' Life of Agricola.

penetrated again to the isthmus, between the firths of Forth and Clyde; and built another military rampart, for the farthest boundary of their empire in Britain. INTRO-
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After this period, the Roman legions in Britain began to support their commanders in their competitions for the empire. During these disputes, two unsubdued nations in the northern parts of Britain, the Caledonians and Meatae, broke through the rampart between the firths, and harassed the province. The emperor, Severus, came to Britain to repress them.³⁰ His wars in Scotland cost him much toil, and many men; but he subdued his wild opponents, and, instead of the weaker barrier of Hadrian, he erected an immense wall of stone, twelve feet high, and eight feet thick, strengthened with towers, castles, and stations at proper distances, and defended by a ditch and military way. This great work (the vestiges of which are still visible in several places) was built nearly parallel to that of Hadrian, at the distance of a few paces further to the north, and from the east coast near Tinmouth, to the Solway firth at Boulness, on the west coast.³¹ Severus died at York. As it was soon after this period that the Saxons began to molest Britain, this introduction may be here terminated. We shall proceed to narrate the history of the invasion and occupation of Britain, by the Saxons and Angles, after first stating all that can be collected of their authentic history before they left the continent.

³⁰ Herodian, l. 3. p. 83. Xiphelin in Sever. p. 339.

³¹ Henry's History, v. 2. Appendix, N° 9. Eutropius, l. 8.

The wall
built.

A. C. 211.

intro-
duction

pointed again to the isthmus between the firths of Forth and Clyde; and built another military rampart, for the further boundary of their empire in Britain.

After this period, the Roman legions in Britain began to support their commanders in their conquests. The empire during these days, two hundred years in the northern part of Britain, the Caledonians and Picts broke through the rampart between the firths, and harassed the province.

A. C. 207

The emperor Severus, came to Britain to repulse them. His was in Scotland cost him much toil, and many men; but he subdued his wild opponents, and instead of the weak barrier

The wall
built

of Hadrian, he erected an immense wall of stone, twelve feet high, and eight feet thick, strengthened with towers, castles, and stations at proper distances, and defended by a ditch and military way. This great work (the vestiges of which are still visible in several places) was built nearly parallel to that of Hadrian, at the distance of a few paces further to the north, and from the east coast near Tinnmouth, to the Solway firth at

A. C. 211

Bombay, on the west coast. Severus died at York. It was soon after this period that the Saxons began to invade Britain, this introduction may be here terminated. We shall proceed to narrate the history of the invasion and occupation of Britain, by the Saxons and Angles, after first stating all that can be collected of their authentic history before they left the

continent.

A. C. 410

out of the continent, and the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, who were the first to invade Britain, and the first to settle in it. The Saxons were the first to invade Britain, and the first to settle in it. The Angles were the first to invade Britain, and the first to settle in it. The Jutes were the first to invade Britain, and the first to settle in it.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK I.

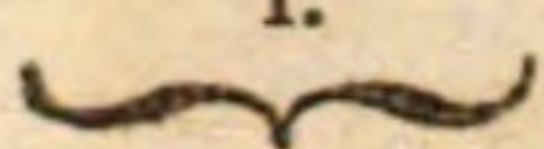
CHAP. I.

The Origin of the Saxons.

THE Anglo-Saxons were the people who transported themselves from the Cimbric peninsula, and its vicinity, in the fifth and sixth centuries, into England. They were branches of the great Saxon confederation, which, from the Elbe, extended itself at last to the Rhine. The hostilities of this formidable people had long distressed the western regions of Europe; and when the Gothic nations overran the most valuable provinces of Rome, the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain soon after the Romans quitted it. The ancient inhabitants, and the progeny of the Roman settlers, disappeared as the new conquerors advanced, or accepted their yoke; and Saxon laws, Saxon language, Saxon manners, government, and barbarism, overspread the land.

This revolution, than which history presents to us none more complete, has made the fortunes of the Saxons, during every period, interesting to us. Though other invaders have appeared in the island, yet the effects of the Anglo-Saxon settlements have prevailed beyond every other. Our language, our govern-

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ment, and our laws, display our Gothic ancestors in every part: they live, not merely, in our annals and traditions, but in our civil institutions and perpetual discourse. The parent tree is indeed greatly amplified, by branches engrafted on it from other regions, and by the new shoots, which the accidents of time, and the improvements of society have produced; but it discovers yet its Saxon origin, and retains its Saxon properties, though more than thirteen centuries have rolled over, with all their tempests and vicissitudes.

Although the Saxon name became, on the continent, the appellation of a confederacy of nations, yet, at first, it denoted a single state. The Romans began to remark it, during the second century of the Christian æra; until that period, it had escaped the notice of the conquerors of the world, and the happy obscurity was rewarded by the absence of that desolation which their ambition poured profusely on mankind.

Saxons first
mentioned by
Ptolemy.

Ptolemy, the Alexandrian, was the first writer whom we know to have mentioned the Saxons. By the passage in his Geography, and by the concurrence of all their future history, it is ascertained, that, before the year 141 after Christ,¹ there was a people called Saxones, who inhabited a territory at the north side of the Elbe, on the neck of the Cimbric Chersonesus, and three small islands, at the mouth of this river. From the same author it is also clear, that the Saxones were of no great importance at this period; for in this peninsula, which is now divided into Jutland, Sleswick, and Holstein, no fewer than six other nations were stationed, besides the Saxones and the remnant of the Cimbri.²

¹ Ptolemy lived in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, according to Suidas, vol. ii. p. 646; but he testifies himself, in the 7th book Mag. Synt. p. 167, that he made astronomical observations at Alexandria in the 2d year of Ant. Pius, or ann. Christ 139. 3 Fab. Bibl. Græc. 412. He speaks also of an eclipse of the moon in the 9th of Adrian, or ann. Chr. 125. De la Lande's Astron. i. p. 312.

He mentions no observation beyond 141. Ib. 117.

² Cl. Ptolemæus Geog. l. ii. c. 11. Marcianus of Heraclea, somewhat later than Ptolemy, gives the Saxons the same position on the neck of the Chersonesus. Pont. ib. 651. The geographical Lexicographer of Byzantium, usually named Stephanus, briefly says, "dwelling in the Cimbric Chersonesus." Steph. Byz. voc. Saxones.

But it is not probable, that the Saxons should have started suddenly into existence, in the days of Ptolemy. The question of their previous history has been therefore much agitated; and an equal quantity of learning and of absurdity has been brought forward upon the subject.

It has been observed, that to explain the origin of the Saxons, the most wild and inconsistent fictions have been framed.³ But it is not this nation only, which has been thus distinguished by the perverseness of the human mind, labouring to explore inscrutable antiquity; every people may recount similar puerilities.

To claim an extravagant duration, has been the folly of every state which has risen to any eminence. We have heard, in our childhood, of the dreams of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Indians, and Chinese; and we know, that even Athenians could wear a golden grasshopper,⁴ as an emblem, that they sprung fortuitously from the earth they cultivated, in ages far beyond the reach of human history: we may therefore pardon and forget the fables of the Saxon patriots.

It has caused much surprize, that Tacitus, who wrote a particular description of Germany, many years before Ptolemy, should have omitted to name the Saxons.⁵ Every author has been unwilling to suppose, that they came to the Elbe in the short interval between these authors; and therefore it has been very generally imagined, that the nation, to whom Tacitus gave the denomination of Fosi,⁶ were the warriors, who acquired afterwards so much celebrity, under the name of Saxons.

Not noticed
by Tacitus.

³ Krantz remarked this: "Ita puerilibus fabulis et anilibus deliramentis omnia scitent, ut nihil in his sibi constet, nihil quadret. Saxonia, p. 1. Yet the absurdity of others did not preserve him from an imitation.

⁴ Potter's Antiq. of Greece, v. i. p. 2. So the Arcadians boasted they were προσεληνοί, or before the moon. Ib. p. 1.

⁵ Conringius thinks, that by some unexplained accident, time has effaced from the

text of Tacitus a passage about the Saxons. Schilter's Thes. Ant. Teut. iii. p. 704.

⁶ Cellarius Geog. Ant. i. p. 303, and Cluverius, iii. Germ. Ant. 87, and many others, assert this. Spener with diffidence defends it. Notit. Germ. Ant. 363. With a manly but rare impartiality he states forcibly the objections to the opinion he adopts, 371. Leibnitz places the Fosi on the Fusa, a river which falls into the Aller, near Zell. Ib. 372.

Other tribes
omitted by
Tacitus.

Before such violent suppositions are admitted, it seems necessary to ask, if Ptolemy mentions any other people, in his geography of Germany, whom Tacitus has not noticed? if he does, the omission of Tacitus is not, in the present instance, singular; if he does not, the conjecture that the Fosi were the Saxons, comes to us with authority.

Upon comparing the Cimbric Chersonesus of Tacitus, with the delineation of the same place by Ptolemy, the question above stated is decided. Ptolemy does not mention the Saxones only, as being there; on the contrary, he names, separately, six other nations, before he comes to the Cimbri. Tacitus, after mentioning the Frisii, Chauci, and Cherusci, speaks of the Fosi, and closes his account of this part of Germany with the Cimbri. Tacitus has not merely neglected to name the Saxons, but also the Sigulones, the Sabalingii, the Cobandi, the Chali, the Phundusii, and the Charudes.⁷ If either of these tribes had risen to eminence, the one, so successful, would have been thought the Fosi. The Saxons became renowned, and their celebrity, rather than their situation, has made some persons desirous to find them in Tacitus. The name of Fosi cannot be strictly applied to the Saxons, with more justice than to the others.⁸

But it cannot be inferred from the silence of Tacitus, that the Saxons were not above the Elbe in his days. In this part of his map of Germany, he does not seem to have intended to give that minute detail of information, which Ptolemy, fortunately for our subject, has delivered. Tacitus directed his philosophical eye on the German states, who differed in manners, as well as in name. He seldom presents a mere

⁷ Cluverius thus stations these tribes. The Sigulones northward from the Saxons, as far as Tunderen and Appenrade; Sabalingii, above these, to the Nipsa and Tobesket, on which are Ripen and Kolding; Cobandi, thence to Holm and Horsens; Chali, beyond these to Hensburg and Hald; the Phundusii and Charudes on the west and east, northward, to the Lymfort; and

the Cimbri in Wensussel. Ant. Ger. iii. p. 94. See also on this Chorography Pontanus, p. 649.

⁸ Strabo, Tacitus, and Ptolemy, exhibit a very natural progression of information on the German geography. Tacitus gives a more accurate detail than Strabo, and Ptolemy, writing later, is still more minute.

nomenclature; he seems to enumerate those the most carefully, whose wars, customs, fame, vicissitudes, and power, had distinguished them from the rest. As the Saxons, and their neighbours, were not remarkable in either of these circumstances, he knew them not, or he passed them over; but Ptolemy pursues the plan of a plain and accurate chorographer; he is solicitous to mark positions, latitudes, distances, and names, leaving narrations of history and manners almost out of his consideration. It was therefore a part of his plan to notice the Saxons, as it was consistent in Tacitus to have omitted them.

CHAP.

I.

The only inferences which can be safely drawn from the silence of Tacitus, and the preceding geographers, are, that the Saxons were then an obscure and inconsiderable people, and had neither molested the nations of greater notoriety, nor incurred the enmity of the Roman government.

It will be unnecessary to waste our time, in enumerating the many fallacious theories which have been framed, on the origin of our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. It will be more useful to select those few facts which may be gleaned from the writers of antiquity on this subject, and to state to the reader, rather what he may believe, than what he must reject.

The Scythian population of Europe.

The early occupation of Europe, by the Kimmerian and Keltic races, has been already displayed. The next great sources of its ancient population were the Scythian or Gothic tribes, who also entered it out of Asia, and who gradually spread themselves from its eastern to its western extremity.

The first appearance of the Scythian tribes in Europe may be placed, on the decisive authority of Herodotus, in the seventh century before the Christian æra^o. He states, likewise, that the Scythians declared their nation to be more recent than any other, and that they reckoned only one thousand years between Targitaos, their first king, and the aggression of Darius. The first scenes of their civil existence, and of their progressive

Scythians in Asia.

^o See before, p. 2.

power, were in Asia, to the east of the Araxes. Here they multiplied and extended their territorial limits, for some centuries, unknown to Europe. Their general appellation among themselves was Scoloti, but the Greeks called them Scythians.¹⁰

To this judicious and probable account of Herodotus, we add the information collected by Diodorus. He says, that the Scythians, formerly inconsiderable and few, possessed a narrow region on the Araxes; but, by degrees, they became more powerful in numbers and in courage. They extended their boundaries on all sides; till at last they raised their nation to great empire and glory.¹¹

One of their kings becoming valiant and skilful in the art of war, they added to their territory, the mountainous regions about Caucasus, and also the plains towards the ocean, and the Palus Mæotis, with the other regions near the Tanais. In the course of time they subdued many nations, between the Caspian and the Mæotis, and beyond the Tanais. Thus, according to Diodorus, the nation increased, and had kings worthy of remembrance. The Sakai, the Massagetai, and the Arimaspoi, drew their origin from them.¹²

The Massagetai seem to have been the most eastern branch of the Scythian nation. Wars arising between them and the other Scythic tribes, an emigration from the latter took place, according to the account which Herodotus selects, as in his opinion the most authentic,¹³ which occasioned their entrance into Europe. Such feuds and wars have contributed, more than any other cause, to disperse through the world its uncivilized inhabitants.

¹⁰ Herod. Melp. f. 5. 7. 6. 11. The wars of the Scythians before this period must have been with their Asiatic neighbours; but I think there is no credit to be given to the system of an ancient Scythic empire. The passage in Justin, which seems to warrant it, and for which I have no great respect, does not appear to me to be a sufficient foundation for it. His period

of 1500 years I believe to be fabulous; and am much inclined to the supposition that xv has been confounded in the MS. of Justin for xv^c; and that, in consequence, fifteen hundred has been read instead of fifteen. See Vindic. of the Celts, p. 14.

¹¹ Diod. Siculus, p. 127.

¹² Ib.

¹³ Herod. Melpom. f. 11.

The emigrating Scythians crossed the Araxes, passed out of Asia, and, invading the Kimmerians, suddenly appeared in Europe, in the seventh century before the Christian æra. Part of the Kimmerians flying into Asia Minor, some of the Scythian hordes pursued them; but, turning in a direction different from that which the Kimmerians traversed, they missed their intended prey, and fell unintentionally upon the Medes. They defeated the Medes, pressed on towards Egypt, and governed those parts of Asia for twenty-eight years, till Cyaxares, the king of Media, at last expelled them."

CHAP.

I.

Scythians
enter Europe.

The Scythian tribes however continued to flock into Europe; and, in the reign of Darius, their European colonies were numerous enough to excite the ambition of the Persian monarch, after his capture of Babylon; but all his efforts failed." In the time of Herodotus, they had gained an important footing in Europe. They seem to have spread into it, from the Tanais to the Danube," and to have then taken a westerly direction; but their kindred colonies, in Thrace, had extended also to the South.

It would be impertinent to the great subject of this history, to engage in a minuter discussion of the Scythian tribes. They have become better known to us, in recent periods, under the name of Goths."

As they spread over Europe, the Kimmerian and Keltic population retired towards the West and South. In the days of Cæsar, the most advanced tribes of the Scythian, or Gothic race, were known to the Romans under the name of Germans. They occupied all the continent but the Cimbric peninsula, and had reached and even passed the Rhine. It has been thought that they had penetrated into Gaul and Britain, when Cæsar invaded these countries. But whether the Belgæ in Gaul, were a Keltic or a German race, is not clear, although

¹⁴ Herod. Clio, f. 15, 103, 104, 105, 106.

¹⁵ Ib. Melpom.

¹⁶ Ib. Melp. f. 47—57.

¹⁷ Mr. Pinkerton's dissertation on the Scythians and Goths may be read with

advantage, if read with previous knowledge and caution. He has enforced Dr. Percy's just distinction between the Keltic and Gothic tribes.

the subject has been much disputed. The Belgæ, in Britain, were most probably Keltic.

The names Scythians and Scoloti, were, like Galli and Kimmerians, not so much local as generic appellations. The different tribes of the Scythians, like those of the Kimmerians and Gauls, had their peculiar distinctive denominations.

The Sakai-suna probably the Saxons.

The Saxons were a German, that is, a Gothic or Scythian tribe; and of the various Scythian nations which have been recorded, the Sakai, or Sacæ, are the people from whom the descent of the Saxons may be inferred, with the least violation of probability. Sakai-suna, or the sons of the Sakai, abbreviated into Sak-sun, which is the same sound as Saxon, seems a reasonable etymology of the word Saxon. The Sakai, who in Latin are called Sacæ, were an important branch of the Scythian nation. They were so celebrated, that the Persians called all the Scythians by their name; and Pliny, who mentions this, remarks them among the most distinguished people of Scythia.¹⁸ Strabo places them eastward of the Caspian, and states them to have made many incursions on the Kimmerians and Treres, both far and near. They seized Bactriana, and the most fertile part of Armenia, which, from them, derived the name Sacasena; and they reached the Cappadoces on the Euxine.¹⁹

That some of the divisions of this people were really called Saka-suna, is obvious from Pliny; for he says, that the Sakai, who settled in Armenia, were named Sacassani,²⁰ which is but Saka-suna, spelt by a person unacquainted with the meaning of the combined words. And the name Sacasena,²¹ which they gave to the part of Armenia they occupied, is nearly the same sound as Saxon. If the Sakai, who reached Armenia, were called Sacassani, they may have traversed Europe with the same appellation; which being pronounced by the Romans from them, and then reduced to writing from their pronuncia-

¹⁸ Pliny, l. 6. c. 19.

¹⁹ Strabo, l. 11. p. 776, 778.

²⁰ Pliny, l. 6. c. 11.

²¹ Strabo, l. 11. p. 776, 778.

tion, may have been spelt with the x instead of the ks, and thus Saxones would not be a greater variation from Sacassani or Saksuna, than we find between French, françois, franci, and their Greek name, *φραγγι*; or between Spain, Espagne, and Hispania.

It is not at all improbable, but that some of these marauding Sakai, or Sacassani, were gradually propelled to the western coasts of Europe, on which they were found by Ptolemy, and from which they molested the Roman empire, in the third century of our æra. There was a people called Saxoi, on the Euxine, according to Stephanus.²² We may consider these also, as a nation of the same parentage; who, in the wanderings of the Sakai, from Asia to the German Ocean, were left on the Euxine, as others had chosen to occupy Armenia.

Of the ancient Scythian language, we have a few words preserved to us:

Ancient
Scythian
language,

Exampaïos	-	-	sacred ways.
Arima	-	-	one.
Spou	-	-	an eye.
Oior	-	-	a man.
Pata	-	-	to kill.
Groucasum	-	-	white with snow. ²³

Of their Gods, we learn that they had seven; whose character and attributes were thought, by Herodotus, to be like some of the most distinguished in the Grecian mythology: as,

and deities.

Tabiti, their principal deity, resembled the Greek Vesta.

Papaïos	-	-	-	Jupiter.
Oitosuros	-	-	-	Apollo.
Artimpasa, or Arippasa	-	-	-	Venus.
Thamimasadas	-	-	-	Neptune.
Apia, wife of Papaïos	-	-	-	Earth.

²² Stephanus de Urb. et Pop. p. 657.

²³ Herod. Melp. f. 52, 28, 110. Pliny, l. 6. c. 19.

BOOK

I.



They had also a warlike deity, like Mars, whose name has not been given to us; and to whom only they raised altars, images, and temples,²⁴ and to whom they sacrificed annually horses and sheep, and a portion of their prisoners. In battle they drank the blood of the first enemy whom they mastered. They scalped their opponents, and offered their heads to their king; and they made drinking vessels of the skulls of their greatest enemies or conquered friends. They had many diviners, who used rods of willow for their predictions.²⁵ In these customs our Gothic ancestors resembled them.

The nations who entered Europe, after the Scythic or Gothic tribes, have been called Slavonian, forming a third great race who have appeared on the vast Germanic continent.

Three genera
of languages
in Europe.

On reviewing the languages of Europe, they seem to give an evidence of its population very analogous to the preceding opinions. The languages in the north and western regions of Europe seem to be ramifications from three great stocks, which may be denominated the Keltic, the Gothic and the Slavonic.

The Keltic.

Of the Keltic, the branches now remaining are the ancient British, the Erse, the Irish, the Cornish, the Armorican, and the Manks.²⁶ A visible similarity of structure and of words connects these together. They differ, as all dialects differ, in countries separated from each other, maintaining intercourse with other nations, and invaded by various enemies with fluctuating fortune; but philologers have classed them under one and the same genus.

The Gothic.

Another collection of languages, whose affinity is apparent and undisputed, has been arranged under the term Gothic.²⁷ It consists of the ancient Saxon, and its kindred languages, the English, the Lowland Scotch, the Frisic, and the Belgic:

²⁴ Herod. Melp. f. 59.

²⁵ Ib. f. 64, 65, 67.

²⁶ See Dr. Percy's judicious preface to Mal-
let's introduction to the History of Denmark.

²⁷ Hicks's Ling. vet. Sept. Thesaur. fur-
nishes us with valuable knowledge on the

Gothic languages. It contains institutions
of the Anglo-Saxon, Maso-Gothic, Franco-
Theotisc, and Islandic, enriched with a
dedication, prefaces, and an epistolary dis-
sertation, which have given light and order
to these venerable remains.

it contains also the Franco-Theotisc and its descendants, the German, the Suabian, and the Swiss: it also comprizes the Icelandic, the Norse, the Danish, the Swedish, and the Orkneyan. Undoubted monuments of the ancient British, the Saxon, and the Franco-Theotisc, in the state which they preserved before the ninth century, still remain for our examination.²⁸ Many compositions of the old Icelandic, of the eleventh and preceding centuries,²⁹ are also in being, from which every student of language can satisfy himself that the Keltic and the Gothic ought in none of their branches to be confounded with each other.

The Sclavonic is a genus of languages which every one would separate from the preceding. The present Russian is thought to be the most faithful specimen of the original Sclavonic. The Poles, the Bohemians, the Dalmatians, the Croats, the Bulgarians, Carinthians, Moravians, and some other tribes adjacent, formerly used its various dialects.³⁰ It prevailed in those parts of Europe where the ancients placed the Sarmatæ.³¹ The numerous tribes who spoke the Sclavonic preserved their ancient name of Venedi long after their invasion of Germany, in the fifth or sixth century, though they were also called Slavi. Their successes enabled them to reach the Saxons and the Franks, but their conquests were terminated

The Sclavonic.

²⁸ Of the ancient British are the compositions of Aneurin, Taliessin, Myrddhin, and others. These authors have preserved to us venerable monuments of the principal branch of the Keltic. For the Saxon remains, see the writings mentioned in Hicks's Thesaur.; and Wotton's Conspectus, annexed, vol. 2. p. 325, contains a list of the Saxon books which have been printed. Schilter's Thesaurus contains the Franco-Theotisc translation of the gospels by Otto, some other remains of this language, and a curious glossary.

²⁹ Many of these have been published by the northern literati, with Latin translations, and contain much interesting history. See a catalogue of the Sagas sent by Peringskiöld to Hickes in the pars altera of his Thesaurus,

p. 310. It states briefly the subject of each MS.

³⁰ The extent of the nationes Slavorum, and of their language, is stated by Helmodus, Chron. Slav. p. 3.; by Krantz in his Wandalia, p. 2; by Chrytæus, Wandalia, p. 3; by Munster, 1. Schard. Hist. Germ. 486; and by Faber, Rer. Musc. 132. On the Slavi, see Spener's Notitia, ii. p. 384. Sunt a Germanis plane diversi generis. Pontanus, Chor. Dan. 710.

³¹ Dubravii Hist. Bohem. 44. Helmodus, p. 3, says, that the Hungarians nec habitu nec lingua discrepant. But Krantz disputes his authority, and affirms, that all acknowledge the Hungarian and Sclavonic to be dissimilar languages. Wandalia, 36.

by the opposition of Charlemagne, and their incessant civil feuds.

The incontrovertible fact, of the existence in ancient Europe of at least three genera of languages, strongly distinguished from each other, conducts us safely to the conclusion, that the collections of nations who spoke them, must have also differed in the chronology of their origin. As the Keltic tribes were found in the most western extremities of Europe, it is reasonable to infer that they visited it earlier than the others: so the Slavonic peoples, residing about its eastern boundaries, may be fairly considered as the latest settlers. The Gothic states, from their position, claim justly an intermediate date. As they advanced westwards, the Keltoi retired before them. As the ramifications of the Goths spread toward the Germanic Ocean, the Slavonic hordes flowed after them from Asia. The Saxon was one of the Gothic states, and it was as far west as the Elbe in the days of Ptolemy. The Saxons were therefore, in all likelihood, as ancient visitors of Europe as any other Gothic tribe. Their situation seems to indicate that they moved among the foremost columns of the vast Gothic emigration; but the particular date of their arrival on the Elbe, or a more particular derivation, it is impossible to prove, and therefore unprofitable to discuss.³²

³² The most ancient nations of Italy and Greece, and those on the coasts of the Mediterranean, the Ægean Sea, and the Adriatic, appear to me to have sprung partly from Phœnician and Egyptian colonizations, and partly from the migrations of the Kimmerian and Keltic races. From this ancient population, secondary colonizations took place, like those which peopled Magna Græcia, and the north coast of the Euxine,

and which settled at Marseilles. In their later population, the Gothic or Scythian tribes, as well as the Carthaginians, must have had some share. But I do not agree with Mr. Pinkerton, that the Greeks and Romans were decidedly Gothic races; I rather think they were a mixture of Phœnicians and Egyptians with Kimmerians or Kelts. Their languages contain many Keltic words.

CHAP. II.

Description of the Country inhabited by the Saxons, near the Elbe, before they occupied Britain.

THE infant state of this people, when the Romans first observed them, exhibited nothing from which human sagacity would have predicted greatness. A territory, on the neck of the Cimbric Chersonesus, and three small islands, contained those whose descendants occupy the circle of Westphalia, the electorate of Saxony, the British islands, the united states of North America, and the British colonies in the two Indies. Such is the course of providence, that empires the most extended, and the most formidable, are found to vanish as the morning mist; while tribes scarce visible, or contemptuously overlooked, like the springs of a mighty river, often glide on gradually to greatness and veneration.

The three islands, which the Saxons in the days of Ptolemy inhabited, were those which we now denominate North Strandt, Busen, and Heiligland.

NORTH STRANDT, formerly torn from South Jutland by the violence of the waves, is situated opposite to Hesum, and above Eiderstede, from both which it is separated by intervals of sea. The Hever, a bay which flows below it, and washes the northern shore of the Eiderstede, is favourable to commercial navigations. This island was formerly about twenty miles long, and in most parts seven miles broad. It once contained twenty-two parishes, and was noted for its agricultural produce, as well as its fish.² The raging of the sea has materially damaged it

CHAP.
II.

Saxon
islands.

North
Strandt.

¹ Cluver. Ant. Ger. iii. p. 97. Pontanus Chorog. 737. Du Bos Histoire Critique i. p. 148. The geographer of Ravenna places Eustrachia among the Saxon isles, l. 5. c. 30.

This may mean the neighbouring peninsula, Eyderstadt, which was almost an island.

² Chrytaeus, 65. Pontanus, p. 741. Ubbo Emmius, p. 30, 158.

since the time of the Saxons. Four calamitous inundations are recorded to have happened, in 1300, 1483, 1532, and 1615; but the most destructive of all began in the night of the 11th October 1634; the island was intirely overflowed; 6,408 persons, 1,332 houses, and 50,000 head of cattle, were washed away into the sea.³ Such devastations have almost annihilated the place. There is now remaining of Nord-strand only the small parish of Pelworm, which derives its safety from the height of its situation.

Busen.

BUSEN lies north of the mouth of the Elbe, to the westward of Ditmarsia, and looks towards Meldorp; in breadth is above two miles, in length near three. It is situated close upon the main land, of which it is suspected to have once formed a part. Being one even plain, the stormy ocean around makes the island a perilous habitation; it has therefore been surrounded by a strong dyke. It contains three or four parishes, with about as many villages; and though boasting no pre-eminence of soil, it commonly yields its produce with moderate fertility.⁴

Heilig-
island.

But the most celebrated, and the most frequented of the Saxon islands was HEILIG-ISLAND. The words literally mean the sacred island.⁵ In the eighth century, and in the eleventh, it had two other names; Fossetis-land,⁶ and Farria, which have been written with various orthography.

In the German Ocean,⁷ not forty miles distant from Eiderstadt,

³ The destruction extended to other parts of Jutland. In the Eyderstede, 664 houses, 2,107 persons, and 12,000 cattle and sheep, were swept off. Busching's Geography.

⁴ Ubbo Emmius, *Rer. Fris.* p. 31. Pontanus *Chorog.* 737, 738, and 741. He derives its name from Buysen, or Busch, a wood. His vernacular names of the fishes, with their Latin names of that day, are in p. 741.

⁵ Some derive the name from Hilgo, a bishop of the place; others, and in the opinion of Pontanus, verior, from some holy virgins who inhabited it. Their sacred steps the respectful grass never covered, as all the credulous natives will attest and show!! Pontanus *Chorog.* 739. But as an

idol much revered, called Foseti, was in it, the epithet perhaps arose from the Pagan superstition.

⁶ *Altf. vita St. Lieudg.* ap. Bouquet, t. 5. p. 449.

⁷ This description is collected from Adam Bremen, p. 64; Pontanus *Chorog.* 738-740; Ubbo Emmius, p. 31; 1 Busching's *Geography*, 166-168; and from the communications of some gentlemen who have frequented the coast. Nieuwerk, at the very mouth of the Elbe, is a mere sand, with a beacon upon it. In 1714, Heilig-land was annexed to the crown of Denmark: it had been formerly possessed by the dukes of Holstein Gottorf. Busching.

and rather farther from the mouth of the Elbe, stands this venerated place. If a line from the Elbe to the peninsula of the Eider were supposed to form the base of an equilateral triangle, Heiligland would be nearly at the vertex. In the middle of the sea, an abrupt projection of rocks rises from the bosom of the waves, and presents one entrance to the navigator. Viewed distinctly, two divisions of the stony mass are remarked; of these, the highland surnamed Klif, is coloured by its red strata of earth, which is every year disclosing more and more of its solid base to the invading waters. From this part, a scanty covering of rich clayey mould, from two feet and an half to four in depth, produces some species of corn, which once excelled the harvests of the Eiderstadt, and a few vegetables, but not sufficient for the demands of its small population. Their cattle once equalled the best produce of Friesland; but their numbers are now inconsiderable. This spot was formerly famous for the capture of herrings, and is still abundant in fish.

The other part, the Duhnen or Downs, is sandy, with a small part of rocky ground, on which stands a fourth of the dwellings of the inhabitants, with the apparatus of their fishery. One hundred and eighty steps compose the descent from the Kilf. The Duhnen was formerly full of the sweetest fountains, but at present the water of its two springs serve only the cattle and common uses. It affords no pasturage, but it abounds with hemp and rabbits. A mole secures it from the sea, and a channel, deep enough for moderate vessels, and about three quarters of a mile broad, has, since 1728, separated the Duhnen from the Klif. In the autumnal season, the island is visited by innumerable successions of birds emigrating from other regions.*

* The officer, whose account Pontanus has preserved, particularizes the sea-birds, cranes, swans, ducks, larks, and thrushes,

among those which perform this autumnal journey, p. 739.

Its inhabitants, who are not numerous now, imbibe health and vigour from its salubrious sky. They are indefatigable in their occupations, which are generally those of the fisherman and the pilot. Perpetually at sea, like their Saxon ancestors, they disregard the terrors of the ocean. Their food consists of their oats, and the produce of their nets.* But though sacred in human estimation, the elements have not respected this island. In the year 800, a furious tempest from the north-west occasioned the greater portion to be swallowed up by the waves. In 1300 and 1500 it suffered materially from the same cause; but the inundation of 1649 was so destructive, that but a small part of the island survived it. If another attack should wash away the sandy downs, scarce one-sixth of the present population could subsist.

Situated near nations highly civilized, this island exists for the benefit of all who navigate the Elbe, which, from its dangerous coast, could not be entered without it. A sea-mark by day, a light-house by night, Heiligland points out the path of safety to the anxious mariner, and abounds with skilful pilots, who possess the local knowledge which he needs. They conduct vessels to the Elbe, the Weser, the Eider, or the Hever. But though now so useful to the navigator, it was anciently an object of terror. Its port, which opens to the south, can contain above an hundred vessels of burthen, and defends them from the north and west. So safe an harbour, a situation so contiguous to many marts of wealth and industry, long invited to it the adventurous pirate. From the age of the Saxons almost to our own, it has been thronged

* The island contained many curious minerals, some petrefactions of filberts and waxen tapers, and an ore of gold, which was sent to the dukes of Holstein, and in the processes of smelting yielded so much sulphur as to discharge the expence of obtaining the pure gold. Pontanus, 739. This is

singular, as gold is seldom found united with sulphur, though auriferous pyrites have been met with in Peru, Siberia, Sweden, and Hungary. Among the substances indurated by the afflux of calcareous matter, we read of human hands. Pont. 739.

with maritime depredators.¹⁰ It is a subject of geographical contest, whether it be the Actania of Pliny, and the island of the Castum Nemus of Tacitus.¹¹

The territory which the original Saxons occupied on the continent, was situated on the western side of the Cimbric peninsula, between the Elbe and the Eyder. This latter river is the boundary of Denmark, and has always been understood to mark the termination of the German states.¹² It rises from a district which was anciently a forest; and from Borsholm, passing Kiel and Rensberg, it continues its course into the British Ocean below Eiderstadt.

Their continental territory.

The region between the Eyder and the Elbe, was denominated Nordalbingia, and its inhabitants Nordalbingi, in the earliest records we possess of these parts.¹³ North of the Eyder, extended Sleswick, in South Jutland; and beyond that the district of North Jutland was continued into Wendila, and ended in Skawen, from which in a clear atmosphere the rocks of Scandinavia are visible.

Three districts, in ancient times, divided this country of Nordalbingia or Eald Saexen.¹⁴ These unequal portions which have preserved their names to recent times, are Ditmarsia, Stormaria, and Holsatia. The progress of the Slavi occasioned a fourth division in the province of Wagria. As the early state of all distinguished nations is a curious subject of con-

¹⁰ It has been often the seat of a royal residence. Radbodus, king of Frisia, had his last sovereignty upon it. See Ubbo Emmius, p. 52. The Sea-kings also frequented it. But this island has been often confounded with Helgoland, a populous district of Norway, which is mentioned in Ohther's voyage, Alfred's Orosius, 24; and in Sir Hugh Willoughby's voyage, Hackluyt, p. 268. The kings of Helgoland, mentioned in the Norwegian Chronicle, were kings of this province. Pont.

¹¹ See Pontanus 665, 737. — Cluverius gives Heiligland as Actania; and Rugen, from its wood and lake, as the island designated by Tacitus, Ant. Germ. 107, 97. — Heiligland

has no woods. Pontanus, while he hints the pretensions of Zealand, seems to prefer Heiligland, because it is near the Elbe, and is almost a translation of castum nemus.

¹² Saxo Gram. Preface, p. 2. Svaningius, in Steph. Comm. in Sax. p. 16.

¹³ Ad. Brem. p. 63. — The Privilegia, Eccl. Hamb. 146, 147. — Helmoldus Chron. Slav. 40. — Some name the people Transalbingi.

¹⁴ So Alfred in his Orosius, p. 20, 21; and his kinsman Ethelwerd, 833, entitle this region. The three divisions exist in Ad. Brem. 22. — and Helmoldus Slav. 40. Subsequent geographers acknowledge it.

BOOK
I.

Ditmarsia.

templation, it may not be uninteresting to add a short account of the provinces which our ancestors first occupied on the continent.

DITMARSIA¹⁵ is separated on the north from Sleswick by the Eyder, and from Stormaria on the south by the Stoer. It fronts the isles of Heiligland and Busen, and extends in length thirty-seven miles, and in breadth twenty-three. Its general aspect is a soil low and marshy, and strong mounds are necessary to keep the ocean to its natural limits. The land on the coast is favourable to corn and cattle, but in the interior appear sterile sands, or marshes uncultivated. Its inhabitants, like those of all unfruitful regions, have been tenacious of the right of enjoying their poverty in independence, and the nature of the country has favoured their military exertions. Their habits of warfare and scanty livelihood produced a harshness of disposition, which often amounted to ferocity.¹⁶

Stormaria.

Below Dithmarsia, and reaching to the Elbe, was STORMARIA.¹⁷ The Stoer, which named the province, confined it on the north. The Suala, Trave, and Billa, determined the rest of its extent. It was almost one slimy marsh. The wet and low situation of Stormaria and Dithmarsia exactly corresponds with the Roman account of the Saxons living in inaccessible marshes.¹⁸ The Stoer is friendly to navigation and fishing. Stormaria is somewhat quadrangular, and its sides may be estimated at thirty-three miles.¹⁹

¹⁵ It is called Thiat-mares-gaho in S. Anscharius, who lived in 840, and in whose work the name is first met with. 1 Langb. Script. 347. Thiatmaresca, in a diploma of 1059, ib. and Thiatmarsgoi, in Ad. Brem. 22.—Teutomarsia, Chryteus Proem.—Also Dythmersi, Dytmerschi.—Suhm has investigated the etymology in his Nordfolk. Oprin. 268.

¹⁶ Pontanus, ch. 667.—Cilicius Belli Dithmars. 427, annexed to Krantz.—Their banner was an armed soldier on a white horse.

¹⁷ Ad. Brem. p. 22. derives the name from Storm, a metaphor expressive of the

seditions of the inhabitants; but Stoer, the river, and Marsi, the residents in marshes, seem to compose a juster etymology. Chryteus Sax. 66.—Pont. 664.

¹⁸ Saxones, gentem in oceani littoribus et paludibus inviis sitam. Orosius, 7. 32.

¹⁹ Pontanus, 666.—Ad. Brem. 22, distinguishes the Sturmarii with the epithet, nobiliores. Their banner was a white swan with a golden collar. Hammaburg (Hamburg) was their metropolis, which before the eleventh century had been *viris et armis potens*; but in Adam's time, was in *solitudinem redacta*. Ib.

Divided from Sleswick by the Levesou on the north, bounded by Wagria on the east, and by the Trave on the south, **HOLSATIA**²⁰ stretches its numerous woods to Ditmarsia. The local appellation of the region thus confined has been, by a sort of geographical catachresis, applied to denominate all that country which is contained within the Eyder, the Elbe, and the Trave. In the age approaching the period of the continental residence of our ancestors, the Holtzati were nominally as well as territorially distinguished from the other states which we have considered.²¹ Their country received from the bounty of nature one peculiar characteristic. As the western and southern coasts of Eald Saexen were repetitions of quagmires, the loftier Holsatia presented a continued succession of forests, and of plains which admitted cultivation.

Strength and courage were qualities which grew up with the Holsatian, in common with his neighbours; he has been proverbial for his fidelity; his generosity has been also extolled; but an ancient writer diminishes the value of this rare virtue, by the companions which he associates to it. "They are emulous in hospitality, because to plunder and to lavish is the glory of an Holsatian; not to be versed in the science of depredation is, in his opinion, to be stupid and base."²²

Such were the countries in which our Saxon ancestors were residing when the Roman geographer first noticed them; and from these they spread terror through Europe, when their attention became directed to maritime depredations.

²⁰ Holsatia was 42 miles from Wilster to Kiel, and about 33 from Hanrahuw to New Munster. Pontan. 665.

²¹ Their etymology has been variously stated; 1st. from the woods they inhabited; Holt, a wood; saten, to be seated. Ad. Brem. and Pontan. — 2. From their country having been called Olt Saxen, Old Saxony. Shering, De Gent. Angl. 28. It certainly was so named by Ravenna, Geog. l. 5. f. 31. Bede, l. 1. c. 15, and l. 5. c. 11.

Chron. Sax. p. 13. By Gregory, Ep. Bib. Mag. v. 16. p. 101. and Boniface, ib. p. 55. who lived in the 7th century. Nennius, 3 Gale Script. Angl. 115. — 3. See another derivation in Verstegan, 91. Eginhard, in the ninth century, names it Holdunstetch. The derivation of Adam of Bremen has prevailed.

²² Helmoldus, Chron. Slav. 40. He adds, that the three people of Nordalbingia differed little either in dress or language. They had the jura Saxonum.

C H A P. III.

*Circumstances favourable to the Increase of the Saxon Power
on the Continent.*BOOK
I.

ABOVE a century elapsed after Ptolemy, before the Saxons were mentioned again by any author who has survived to us. Eutropius is the second writer who noticed them. In accounting for the rebellion of Carausius, and his assumption of the purple, he states the Saxons to have united with the Franks, and to have become formidable to the Romans for their piratical enterprizes. In the century which elapsed between Ptolemy and Carausius, the Saxons had greatly advanced in power and reputation, and they were beginning their system of foreign depredations when that Emperor encouraged them to pursue it. Their prosperity during this interval seems to have arisen from the repulse of the Romans from the Elbe to the Rhine; from the rise of the Franks; and from their own application to maritime expeditions.

Progress of
the Romans
to the Elbe.

In the reign of Augustus, Drusus, his son-in-law, attempted to complete the design of Cæsar, by the conquest of Germany. The blood of the natives of the Rhine and Ems was profusely shed, and the Romans reached the Elbe; but before they passed that river, the conqueror received, from natural causes, the fate which he was unsparingly dealing to others. Tiberius succeeded to the station, though not to the abilities of Drusus, and at length passing the Weser, waved the imperial standards over the Elbe. His fleet triumphantly sailed up the river; he contemplated the collected warriors who lined its northern bank; but hazarded no attack.*

* Dion Cassius, p. 622—628, and the Germans, i. p. 78—85.
authors in Mascou's learned history of the

The successes of Maraboduus summoned Tiberius to the Danube, and whilst he was there conflicting with the Marcomanni and their allies, the avarice of Quintilius Varus provoked the Germans of the Rhine to rebel. Arminius stood forward as the champion of Germany, and the Roman general and his army were destroyed. This misfortune struck Rome with consternation, and the horrors of an invasion, like that of the Cimbri and Teutones, were anticipated; but Arminius was contented to have merited the title of the deliverer of his country.² He projected no schemes of offensive conquest or of vengeful devastation. He restored to his countrymen the possession of their native soil up to the Rhine; and when Tiberius hastened to relieve the capitol from its dismay, the imperial general could gain no decisive laurels from the cautious patriot.³

It was reserved for Germanicus to renew the victories of his father, and to endanger the independence of the continent. His warfare, though his name lives in the panegyric of Tacitus, can be only compared with that which we have witnessed in our days in St. Domingo. His first expedition was undertaken for the express purpose of human slaughter. One part of his legions, having destroyed their mutinous comrades, desired to attack the enemy, to appease, by the blood of the Germans, the manes of their rebellious fellow soldiers. They accordingly rushed to the massacre of the Marsi. "Germanicus, to spread

² Tacitus gives him this title, Ann. l. 2. c. 88. Kenler calls him the leader of the Saxons. 1 Schard. H. G. 501; but he was of the Cherusci. Spen. Not. 297. His character in Paterculus is interesting; "Juvenis genere nobilis, manu fortis, sensu celer, ultra promptus ingenio, ardorem animi vultu oculisque preferens." He had served in the Roman armies, and obtained the equestrian dignity. The pen of Tacitus has completed his fame. For the disaster of Varus, see Dion Cass. 667. Paterc. ii. c. 117. and Tac. Ann. l. 1.

³ There is a history of Arminius by Kenler, 1 Schard. p. 501—518. In the dialogue on his military merit by Hutt, ib. 426, the

German prince says to Hannibal, "Nam eorum qui res preclaras gesserunt, nemo majoribus difficultatibus enisus, aut gravioribus circa impedimentis eluctatus est.— In summa rerum aut hominum inopia, misera egestate, desertus ab omnibus, impeditus undique, tamen ad recuperandam libertatem, viam mihi communivi; citraque omnem extra opem, omne adjumentum, hoc solo præditus et suffultus animo, a me ipso rerum initia petivi et bellum extremè periculosum, non antea cœptum sed ab omnibus desperatum prosequutus sum." He details his exertions, and contrasts them with the exploits of Scipio and Alexander.

the slaughter as wide as possible, divided his men into four battalions. The country fifty miles round was laid waste with fire and sword: neither sex nor age excited pity, nor any places, holy or profane; their sacred temple, the Tanfanæ, was destroyed. This slaughter was perpetrated without their receiving a wound, because the enemies they attacked were sunk in sleep, or unarmed and dispersed.”*

The surprize of the Catti, against whom Germanicus sent Cœcina, was one of their next exploits. “His arrival was so little expected by the Catti, that their women and children were either immediately taken prisoners or put to the sword; Mattium, the capital, was destroyed by fire, and the open plains were laid waste.”† In subsequent battles we usually find the addition, that “no quarter was given to the barbarians;” and in the progress of the Romans, the country was always desolated. In one battle we have this ferocious plan of warfare, even commanded by the applauded hero of the historian: “Germanicus, rushing among the ranks, besought his men to give no quarter; he told them they had no need of prisoners, and that the extirpation of the barbarians would alone end the war!!”‡

Trained amid their soldiery to such sanguinary habits, it is not surprizing that the Roman emperors should have carried to the throne the cruelties of the camp, and have exhibited there the merciless character, which in such campaigns as these they must have acquired. But to destroy the uncultivated nations of Europe, however unoffending, was no crime in the popular estimation at Rome. A surname from a country subdued, was a charm which made its chieftains deaf to all the groans of humanity and the clamours of violated right. They pursued this trade of sanguinary ambition, though Greece had taught the Romans to philosophize on morality; and their orators, to destroy an obnoxious governor, could sometimes declaim as if they had felt themselves the advocates of mankind!

* Tacit. Ann. l. 1.

† Ib.

‡ Tacit. Ann. l. 2.

After these massacres of the Marsi and the Catti, Germanicus sailed up the Ems, and marched his army to the Weser. At this juncture Arminius' was not wanting to his countrymen; but the superior knowledge of his competitor, and the discipline of the invading troops, were rapidly annihilating the rude liberty of Germany. Its bravest tribes fell fruitlessly in its defence; the survivors trembled for the awful issue; when the jealous policy of Tiberius, who had succeeded to the empire, rescued them from absolute conquest. He called back Germanicus from his victorious progress; although he asked to continue in his command but one year more, and would have extended the Roman empire to the Elbe.⁸

An. Ch.

17.

Repulse of
the Romans
to the Rhine.

The recal of Germanicus ended the progress of the Romans in the north of Germany. They never reached the Elbe again. They retreated gradually to the South, though not with perpetual retrogression. Sometimes the interior tribes of the country mourned their presence, and as often were consoled by their expulsion. But after various conflicts, the Rhine, at length, near the modern Leyden, separated the Romans and their allies from the free nations of the north.⁹ It was not, indeed, an impassable boundary, but the Romans generally kept within it: and thus the nations beyond, and more especially the Saxons, who were among the most remote, had full leisure to increase their population, and to improve the propitious circumstances which attended their peculiar situation.

But this auspicious calm the savage Maximin at last disturbed. After the assassination of Alexander Severus, the ferocious Thracian assumed the contaminated purple, and announced his accession to the north of Germany in a series

Rise of the
Franks,
A. D.
235-240.

⁷ M. Tercier believes that the famous Irmensul was "un monument élevé en honneur d'Arminius," whose heroic actions the Germans long celebrated in their songs. Mem. Ac. Insc. 41. p. 333.

⁸ Tacit. Ann. l. 2. f. 26.

⁹ Bebelius too eagerly denies that any part of Germany beyond the Rhine was

conquered, though the emperors arrogated the surname Germanicus. Orat. vet. Ger. 1 Schard. 257. Mascou fairly states the fact, i. p. 131.—The Tabula Peutinger (on which some excellent remarks of M. Freret are in Mem. vii. p. 292) confirms this boundary.

of victorious slaughter and unrelenting devastation. So irresistible was the tempest, that unless (says the historian) the Germans had escaped by their rivers, marshes, and woods, he would have reduced all Germany into subjection. His furious valour once betrayed him into a situation of so much danger in a marsh, that he was saved with difficulty, while his horse was drowning. His haughty letters to the senate display the exultation and the ferocity of his mind. "We cannot relate to you how much we have done. For the space of four hundred miles we have burnt the German towns, we have brought away their flocks, enslaved their inhabitants, and slain the armed. We should have assailed their woods, if the depths of the marshes had permitted us to pass."¹⁰

This destructive invasion, like many other evils, generated, by the greatness of the necessity, a proportionate benefit. By a conjecture more probable in itself, and more consistent with contemporaneous facts than any other which has been mentioned, a modern writer has very happily ascribed to it the formation of that important confederation, which, under the name of Franks, withstood the Roman arms, and preserved the liberties of Germany."

Their true
origin.

It is the prevailing opinion of the learned, that about the year 240 a new confederation was formed, under the name of Franks, by the old inhabitants of the Lower Rhine and Weser." As the incursion of Maximin took place about the year 235, the additional supposition of Spener is very happy, that this confederation arose from a general desire of security and revenge.

The horizon of Rome was at this juncture darkening; civil wars were consuming the strength of the empire, and its

¹⁰ Jul. Capitol. Maxim. c. 12. Herodian, l. 7. p. 146. ed. Steph. The history of Maximin is related by Mr. Gibbon with elegance and accuracy, i. p. 173—190. 4to.

¹¹ Spener's Notit. Germ. l. 4. p. 338. "Non valde vereor adfirmare, Maximini crudelem in Germaniam incursionem fœdus inferioris Rheni accolis Germanis suasisse."

¹² 1 Gibbon, 259.—Foncemagne Mem. Ac. xv. p. 268. Freret Hist. Ac. Insc. ix. p. 88. and Mem. xxxiii. p. 134. unite in the opinion.—Mascou, who dislikes it, p. 196, has evidently not weighed all the circumstances.

Germanic enemies, who had many losses of liberty, life, and property, to avenge, were learning the dangerous secret of the benefit of union. The Alemanni¹³ had alarmed Marcus Aurelius with its first exhibition. The advantage of this confederation generated others, until the Roman empire was overwhelmed by the accumulating torrent; and her western provinces were parcelled out among those warlike spoilers, whose improved posterity now govern Europe.

This sagacious union of strength in a common cause, was consecrated on the Rhine by the general name of Franks, in which the peculiar denominations of the tribes were absorbed.¹⁴ Their valour achieved its end; and their existence and general conduct were peculiarly useful to the Saxon nation.¹⁵ The safety and success of our ancestors may have flowed from this timely confederation. The Saxon exploits on the ocean inflicted such wounds on the Roman colonies and commerce, that a peculiar fleet was appointed to counteract them; the southern coast of Britain was put under an officer called Comes Littoris Saxonici; and every historian mentions them with dread and hatred. It does not seem visionary to state, that it would have been one of the first employments of the Roman indignation to have exterminated them by an expedition like those of Drusus, Germanicus, and Maximin, if the confederation of the Franks had not interposed an impregnable barrier, and kept the imperial armies employed on the south banks of the Rhine.¹⁶

Their use to
the Saxons.

A third cause of the prosperity of the Saxons was their application to maritime expeditions.

¹³ For the nations who assumed this name, see Spener, 175, 179.

¹⁴ The states, who united in the league, are particularised by Spener, p. 341; and by Chrytaeus, Sax. Proem.

¹⁵ The ancient writers give us some curious traits of the Franks of this period: "Francis familiare est ridendo fidem frangere." Vopiscus Proc. c. xiii. p. 237. Ed. Bip. "Gens Francorum infidelis est." "Si perjeret Francus quid novi faciet, qui perjurium ipsum sermonis genus putat

"esse non criminis." Salvian de Gub. Dei, l. 4. p. 82. Mag. Bib. Pat. 5.—Again, l. 7. p. 116. "Franci mendaces, sed hospitales."—This union of laughter and crime, of deceit and politeness, has not been entirely unknown to France in many periods since the fifth century.

¹⁶ Pontanus Origin. Franc.—Spener 333—360. and his 2 vol. 421—429; and Schilter's Glossary, 316—322. furnish much information on this people.

C H A P. IV.

*The Application of the Saxons to Maritime Expeditions.*BOOK
I.

THE situation of the Saxons on the sea-coast of that part of Europe, which was in the neighbourhood of some fertile provinces of the Roman empire, and yet remote enough to elude their vengeful pursuit; and the possession of an island, with an harbour so ample, and yet so guarded against hostile assaults, were circumstances propitious to a system of piracy.

But such a current of action is not hastily chosen by savage warriors. The sea is naturally a scene of terror to barbarians. Distant voyages are fatal to them from their ignorance, and still more formidable from their superstitions. The Saxons might have lived amid their rocks and marshes, conflicting with their neighbours, till they had mouldered away in the vicissitudes in which so many tribes perished, if one incident had not excited their peculiar attention to maritime expeditions.

This event, which tinged with new and lasting colours the destiny of Europe, by determining the Saxons to piratical enterprizes, was the daring achievements of the Franks, whom Probus had transported to the Pontus. To break the strength of the barbaric myriads, who were every year assaulting the Roman state with increasing force, this emperor had recourse to the customary policy of settling colonies of their warriors in places very distant from the region of their nativity.

Among others, a numerous body of Franks was transplanted to the Euxine. The attachment of mankind to the scenes of their childhood; and their ardent longing, when in foreign lands, for the country, which their relatives inhabit, where their most pleasing associations were formed, where their individual characters were acquired, and customs like their

Voyage of
the Franks
from the
Euxine.

own exist, are feelings so natural to every bosom, and so common to every age, that it is not surprizing that the Franks, when removed to the Euxine, regretted their native wilds.¹ We read therefore with general sympathy, that they soon afterwards seized the earliest opportunity of abandoning their foreign settlement. They possessed themselves of many ships, probably the vessels in which they had been carried from the German Ocean to the Euxine, and formed the daring plan of sailing back to the Rhine. Its novelty and improbability procured its success. They ravaged Asia and Greece; for, not safety merely, but revenge and plunder were also their objects. Landing in Sicily, they attacked and ravaged Syracuse with great slaughter. They carried their triumphant hostility to several districts of Africa. They were beaten off by a force sent from Carthage, but, sailing immediately to Europe, they concluded their voyage by reaching in safety their native shores.²

In this singular enterprize, a system to endure for ages received its birth. It discovered to themselves and their neighbours, to all who heard and could imitate, that from the Roman colonies a rich harvest of spoil might be gleaned by those who would seek for it at sea. These Franks had desolated every province almost with impunity; they had plunder to display, which must have fired the avarice of every needy spectator; they had acquired skill, which they who joined them might soon inherit; and perhaps the same adventurers, embarking again with new followers, evinced by fresh booty the practicability of similar attempts. The Saxons soon afterwards began their depredations, and by this new habit evinced the effect of the Frankish adventure.

The piracies of the Franks and Saxons are not mentioned in the imperial writers anterior to this navigation; but they seem

Usurpation
of Carausius.

¹ So strong was this feeling in Germany, that some of the German chiefs, whom Augustus forced from their country, killed themselves. 1 Mascou, 85.

² The original authorities are, Zosimus, end of book 1; Eumen. Paneg. iv. c. 18; and Vopiscus in Probô, c. 18.

to have become frequent after it; for, within a few years subsequent, the Franks and Saxons so infested the coasts of Belgium, Gaul, and Britain, that the Roman government was compelled to station a powerful fleet at Bologne on purpose to confront them. The command was entrusted to Carausius, a Menapian, of the meanest origin, but a skilful pilot, and a valiant soldier. It was observed, that this commander attacked the pirates only after they had accomplished their ravages, and never restored the capture to the suffering provincials. This excited a suspicion, that by wilful remissness he permitted the enemy to make the incursions, that he might obtain the booty on their return. Such conduct was fatal to the design of suppressing the piracies of the Franks and Saxons. It permitted the habit of such enterprizes to become established, and the success of those who eluded his avarice, on their return, kept alive the eagerness for maritime depredations.*

Another incident occurred to establish their propensity and power. The emperor, informed of the treasons of Carausius, ordered his punishment. Apprized of his impending fate, he took refuge in augmented guilt and desperate temerity; he boldly assumed the purple, and was acknowledged emperor by the legions in Britain. The perplexities in which the Roman state was at that time involved, favoured his usurpation; and, to maintain it, he had recourse to one of those important expedients which, originally intended for a temporary exigency, lead ultimately to great revolutions.

He teaches
the Saxons,
A. D.

287.
the naval art.

As it was only by active warfare that his sovereignty could be maintained, he made alliances with the Germans, and particularly with the Saxons and Franks, whose dress and manners he imitated, in order to increase their friendship. To make them of all the use he projected, he encouraged their application to maritime affairs; he gave them ships and experienced officers, who taught them navigation and the art

* 1 Gibbon, 362. 1 Mascou, 243.

of naval combat.⁴ Thus fostered by an imperial alliance, and supplied with those essential requisites, without which they could not have become permanently formidable, they renewed their predatory attacks with licensed severity. Every coast which had not received Carausius as its lord was open to their incursions. They perfected themselves in their dangerous art, and by the plunder which they were always gaining, they increased their means as well as their avidity for it. The usurpation of Carausius, and the education of the Saxons to the empire of the ocean, lasted seven years.

Sixty years afterwards a similar occurrence advanced the Saxon prosperity. Magnentius, another usurper of the bloody and restless sceptre of Rome, having murdered Constans, endeavoured to preserve the perilous dignity by an alliance of fraternization with the Franks and Saxons, whom in return he protected and encouraged.⁵ This was another of those auspicious incidents, which enhanced the consequence and power of those tribes who had been invisible to Tacitus, and who had been merely known by name to Ptolemy. But as Providence had destined them to be the stock of a nation whose colonies, commerce, arts, and knowledge are pervading every part of the world; it fostered them with a succession of those propitious circumstances which gradually formed and conducted them to that great enterprise for which they were principally destined.

Magnentius
allies with
them.

⁴ 1 Mascou, 244. 1 Gibbon, 364.

⁵ Julian Orat. cited 1 Mascou, 280.

C H A P. V.

*The League of the Saxons with other States, and their Continental Aggrandizement.*BOOK
I.

BUT in the beginning of the fourth century, the Saxons were not alone on the ocean; other states were moving in concert with them, whose nominal distinctions were lost in the Saxon name. This addition of strength multiplied the Saxon fleets, gave new terror to their hostility, and recruited their losses with perpetual population. The league extended. What emulation, policy, or rapacity may have first prompted, success and fear made more universal. They who could not be tempted to unite, dreaded the wrath of those whose proffered alliance they refused: and at length, most of the nations north of the Rhine assumed the name, strengthened the association, and fought to augment the predominance of the Saxons. The Chauci seem to have led the way. The Frisii, urged by kindred passion and a convenient position, willingly followed. The precise date of the accession of others is not so clear; but in some period of their power the Chamavi, and at last the Batavi, the Toxandri, and Morini, were in their alliance. The Cimbri, the Jutes, the Angles, and others not so discernible, added their numbers to the formidable league, which began to dissolve after their expedition to Britain.¹

Without detaining the reader by a detail of the modern chorography answering to the position of these tribes,² it may

¹ Spener's Notitia, 363—370. That the Saxons of the fifth century were an association of peoples, was remarked by Stillingfleet, Orig. Brit. 305. and Langhorn, Flench. Ant. Alb. 342. See also Freret, Mem. Ac. Inscr. xxxiii. p. 134. and 2 Gibbon, 523.

² This may be seen as to the Chauci, Spener, 302—313. Cluverius, l. 3. p. 72. Cellarius, Ant. Geog. i. p. 298.—The Frisii, Spener, 314—332. Cluv. p. 55. Cell. 295. The Chamavi, Sp. 260, &c. The same authors treat of the others.

be sufficient to state concisely, that as the boundaries of the Saxon states enlarged with their leagues, they embraced the population between the Elbe and the Weser; from the Weser they reached to the Ems, and, still augmenting, they diffused themselves to the Rhine with varying latitude, as the Franks, many of whose allies they seduced, quitting that region, marched upon Gaul. The extension of this new confederation was favoured, by the change of policy and position, adopted by the Franks. As this people stood foremost to the Roman vengeance, they experienced its effects. They had many distressing wars to maintain, which in time compelled them to abandon maritime expeditions, to consolidate their strength for their continental conflicts. Hence, the nearer we approach the period of the invasion of England, we find the Franks less and less united with the Saxons, and even wars begin to be frequent between the rival friends. As the former moved onward, to the conquest of Belgium and Gaul, the Saxons appear to have been the only nation, under whose name the vessels of piracy were navigated. Saxons were the enemies every where execrated, though under this title several nations fought. Some of the tribes on the maritime coast, who had composed the league of the Franks, abandoned it, to share the easier warfare and ampler booty of the Saxons. At last this successful people diffused themselves into the interior of Germany so victoriously, that the vast tracts of country embraced by the Elbe, the Sala, and the Rhine, became subjected to their power,³ in addition to their ancient territory from the Elbe to the Eyder.⁴ An old Belgic chronicle, in

³ Ad. Brem. p. 3. Chrytæus, 72. et Proem. Krantz Saxon, p. 5. Spener Notit. 2 vol. 400—413. Eginhart, the secretary of Charlemagne, says, p. 7. that in his time, Saxony Germaniæ pars non modica est.

⁴ The Saxon poet commemorates the Saxons to have retained this region in the time of Charlemagne:

Saxonum populus quidam quos claudit ab austro

Albia sejunctum positos Aquilonis ad axem,
Hos Northalbingos patrio sermone vocamus.

ap. Du Chesne, Hist. Fran. Script.

2. p. 160.

BOOK
I.

rhyme, makes Neder Sassen, Lower Saxony, to have been confined by the Scheld and the Meuse;⁵ but this is a larger extent than others admit.

The Jutes.

But those allies of the Saxons with whom the history of Britain is most connected, were the Jutes and Angles. The Jutes inhabited Jutland, or rather that part of it, which was formerly called South Jutland,⁶ but which is now known as the dutchy of Sleswick. The little band first introduced into England by Hengist and Horsa, were Jutes. Their name has been written with all the caprices of orthography.⁷

The Angles.

The Angles have been derived from different parts of the north of Germany. Engern, in Westphalia, was a favourite position, because it seemed to suit the geography of Tacitus. Angloen, in Pomerania, had good pretensions, from the similarity of its name; and part of the dutchies of Mecklenburg and Lunenburg was chosen out of respect to Ptolemy; but the opinion of Camden has, from its truth, prevailed over all. In the days of Tacitus and Ptolemy, the Angli may have been in Westphalia or Mecklenburg, or elsewhere; but at the era of the Saxon invasion, they were resident in the district of Anglen, in the dutchy of Sleswick.⁸

The dutchy of Sleswick extends from the river Levesou, north of Kiel, to the Tobesket, on which stands Colding; but that particular position, which an ancient Saxon author calls Old England, extends from the city of Sleswick to

⁵ Oude bocken hoor ick gewagen,
Dat all t'land beneden Nyemagen,
Wilen neder Sassen hiet,
Alsoo als die stroom verschieet
Van der Maze ende van den Rhyn,
Die Schelt was dat westende syn.
Schilt. Thes. 706.

I have heard that old books say,
That all the land beneath Nyemagen
Whilom was called Nether Saxony,
Also that the stream
Of the Maes and the Rhine confined it:
The Scheld was its western end.

⁶ Chrytæus, Saxon, 65. Pont. Chor.
Dan. 655.

⁷ As Geatum, Giotæ, Jutæ, Gutæ, Geatani, Jotuni, Jetæ, Jutæ, Juitæ, Vitæ, &c. The Vetus Chronicon Holsatiæ, p. 54, says the Danes and Jutes are Jews of the tribe of Dan! and Munster as wisely calls the Helvetii, Hill-vitæ, or Jutes of the hills!

⁸ Camden's Introduction. He attributes to the Angles the German cities Engelheim, where Charlemagne was born, Ingolstad, Engleburg, Engelrute; and Angleria, in Italy.

Flensberg. Sleswick was the capital of Anglen, and was distinguished, in the eleventh century, for its population and wealth.⁹

CHAP.
V.

⁹ Pontanus, Geographia, 655, 656. Ethelwerd, 833. Anglia vetus sita est inter Saxones et Giotos, habens oppidum capitale quod sermone Saxonico Sleswic nuncupatur, secundum vero Danos, Haithabay; and see

Alfred's Orosius, p. 25. Some, who admit this situation, will not allow that the Angli were German emigrants. Schilter's Glos. p. 49.—Wormius derives them from the Jutes. Literat. Runica, p. 29.

WILLIAM the Conqueror, who was in this state of progressive greatness in the fourth century, the property and continuity of Britain invited their frequent visits; and their attacks were favoured by the incursions of other enemies, who were called by the historians Irish, Scots, and Attacotti, and in a similar combination of hostilities, Nechtanas, the commander of the Saxon forces, was slain, and the general of the island, Folthardus, perished in the same manner. Several officers were sent by the Roman emperors to succeed them; but their exertions being inadequate to the necessity, Theodosius, a brave and successful leader, was appointed by Valentinian in their room. The Picts and the co-operating tribes attacked from the north, while the Saxons and their allies assaulted the maritime coasts. Theodosius, from Richborough, marched towards London, and dividing his army into parties, corresponded to the positions of the enemies; he attacked the robbers encountered with their plunder, of the hands that were carrying away the mangled inhabitants and their cattle, he destroyed, and regained the spoil; of this he distributed a small share among his wearied soldiers; the residue he restored to the owners, and entered the city, wondering at its sudden deliverance, with the glories of an ovation. My battles, but lessened by experience, and instructed by the confessions of the captives and deserters, he combated this mixture of enemies, with well-combined tactics and unexpected attacks. To recall those who in the confusion, from fear or from cowardice, had abandoned their ranks or their allegiance, he proclaimed an amnesty; and to complete the benefit he had

BOOK
I.

THE
SAXONS
ATTACK
BRITAIN

are defeated
by Theodo-
sius.

CHAP. VI.

Sequel of their History to the Period of the Anglo-Saxon Invasion.

BOOK
I.

A. C.
368.
The Saxons
attack
Britain;

are defeated
by Theodo-
sius.

WHILE the Saxons were in this state of progressive greatness, in the fourth century, the prosperity and contiguity of Britain invited their frequent visits; and their attacks were favoured by the incursions of other enemies, who are called by the historians Picti, Scoti, and Attacotti.

In a similar combination of hostilities, Nectaridus, the commander of the Saxon shore, was slain, and the general of the island, Fullo-faudes, perished in an ambush. Several officers were sent by the Roman emperors to succeed them; but their exertions being inadequate to the necessity, Theodosius, an experienced and successful leader, was appointed by Valentinian in their room. The Picts and the co-operating tribes attacked from the north, while the Saxons and their allies assaulted the maritime coasts. Theodosius, from Richborough marched towards London, and dividing his army into battalions, correspondent to the positions of the enemies, he attacked the robbers encumbered with their plunder. The bands that were carrying away the manacled inhabitants and their cattle, he destroyed, and regained the spoil; of this he distributed a small share among his wearied soldiers; the residue he restored to its owners, and entered the city, wondering at its sudden deliverance, with the glories of an ovation.

Lessoned by experience, and instructed by the confessions of the captives and deserters, he combated this mixture of enemies, with well-combined artifice and unexpected attacks. To recal those who in the confusion, from fear or from cowardice, had abandoned their ranks or their allegiance, he proclaimed an amnesty;¹ and to complete the benefit he had

¹ Am. Marcel. l. 27. c. 8. p. 283.

begun, he prosecuted the war with vigour in the north of Britain. He prevented by judicious movements the meditated attack; and hence the Orkneys became the scene of his triumphs. The Saxons, strong in their numbers and intrepidity, sustained several naval encounters before they yielded to his genius.² They ceased at last to molest the tranquillity of Britain, and the addition of a deserved sur-name, Saxonicus, proclaimed the services of Theodosius.³ He added the province of Valentia to Roman Britain, restored the deserted garrisons, and coerced the unruly borderers by judicious stations and a vigilant defence.⁴

The Saxon confederation might be defeated, but was not subdued. Such was its power, that they were bold enough to defy the Roman armies by land, and invaded the regions on the Rhine with a formidable force. The imperial general was unable to repulse them; a reinforcement encouraged him. The Saxons declined a battle, and sued for an amicable accommodation. It was granted. A number of the youth fit for war was given to the Romans, to augment their armies; the rest were to retire unmolested. The Romans were not ashamed to confess their dread of the invaders, by a perfidious violation of the treaty. They attacked the retreating Saxons from an ambush; and, after a brave resistance, the unguarded barbarians were slain or made prisoners.⁵ It is to the disgrace of literature, that the national historian of the day has presumed, while he records, to apologise for the ignominious fraud.

Before many years elapsed, they renewed their depredations, and defeated Maximus.⁶ At the close of the fourth century

370.

Defeated by
the Romans
on the conti-
nent.

² Claud. 4 Cons. Hon. 31. *maduerunt Saxone fuso Orcades. Pacatus Paneg. Theod. Saxo consumptus bellis navalibus*, p. 97.

³ Pacat. 98. "*Quum ipse Saxonicus*."—The British government have wisely done equal justice to the defenders of their country: We have Earl St. Vincent, Lord Viscount Duncan Baron of Camperdown, and Baron

Nelson of the Nile, and Earl of Trafalgar.

⁴ Am. Marc. p. 406. Claudian. de 3 Consul. Hon. states his successes against the Picts and Scots, p. 44.

⁵ Am. Mar. 416.—Orosious, vii. c. 12. and Cassiodorus, 2 vol. 636. also mention the incident.

⁶ S. Ambrose, quoted 1 Mascou, 371.

BOOK

I.

they exercised the activity and resources of Stilicho. The unequal struggle is commemorated by the encomiastical poet, whose genius gilds, with a departing ray, the darkening hemisphere of Rome.⁷ After his death new eruptions commenced.⁸ They supported the Armorici in their rebellion,⁹ awed the Gothic Euric, began to war with the Franks,¹⁰ and, extending the theatre of their spoil, made Belgium, Gaul, Italy, and Germany tremble at their presence; at length, Charlemagne having prosecuted against them one of the most obstinate and destructive wars which history has recorded, their predominance was abased, and their spirit of aggression destroyed.¹¹ The celebrity and power of the Saxons on the continent then ceased. They dwindled to a secondary rank, and have ever since acted a secondary part in the events of German history.

⁷ Claudian. de Laud. Stil. l. 2. p. 140. Elz. edit.

⁸ Jerom in Mascou, 410.

⁹ Sid. Appoll. Paneg. Avit. v. 369.

¹⁰ 2 Mascou, 39. Gregory of Tours, l. 2. c. 19. mentions the capture of the Saxon islands by the Franks; and l. 4. c. 10. what

he calls their rebellion and Chlotarius' successes against them. Ib. et c. 14; and their ravages in France, c. 37. p. 95.

¹¹ See this war in Eginhart's Vita Carol. Magn. and in the Poeta Saxon. Antiq. Annal. de gestis Caroli M. ap. Duchesne, 2. p. 136.

CHAP. VII.

The History of Britain elucidated from the Death of Maximus in 388, to the final Departure of the Romans.

SOON after this period, the Saxon invasion of England occurred. It will be therefore useful to consider the state of the island at that time. A just perception of the events which occurred in Britain previous to their arrival, will usefully illustrate the causes of their success, and remove some of the difficulties, with which this portion of our history is peculiarly embarrassed.

CHAP.
VII.

The transactions of the natives of Britain, from the fall of Maximus, to the Saxon invasion, are almost lost to us, from the want of accurate historiographers of this period. The crude declamation of Gildas, Bede's extracts from him, the abrupt intimations of Nennius, and the British romance of Jeffry, are all the original documents which either Britons or Saxons have left us on this curious and important interval.

The querulous invective of Gildas has been reduced to some chronology by Bede, and the broken narrations of Nennius have been amplified by Jeffry; but the labours of Bede have only succeeded in making obscurity more obscure; and all that the imagination of Jeffry has effected, has been to people the gloom with fantastic shapes, which make us welcome the darkness that they attempt to remove.¹

The chronology into which Bede has distorted the rhetoric of Gildas, was erroneously chosen by our venerable and

Bede's chronology of this period erroneous.

¹ In the Archæology of Wales are two copies of Jeffry's History in Welsh; but they are not entitled to more historical respect than his Latin work. The Welsh triads abound with curious notices concerning the

ancient history of the Britons; but these are very unlike the wild fables of Jeffry; and this dissimilarity, while it makes the triads more respectable, increases our disrespect for his work, whether in Welsh or Latin.

valuable historian.* His authority, which his learning would in any age make respectable, has been peculiarly impressive, because, without his ecclesiastical history, we should have lost almost all knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons for three centuries after their establishment in this island. With unsuspecting deference, our historians have rather studied Gildas, as he has been transcribed by Bede, than in his own composition; and thus they have governed the chronology of this interesting interval by the authority of Bede, without examining if Bede has not been himself mistaken.

It will much assist our inquiry to take a general survey of the history of the Roman empire at this period.

Rise and fall
of Maximus,
383-388.

While Gratian governed the western empire, and Theodosius the eastern, the legions of Britain, who had so often been conspicuous for their turbulence, seceded from their allegiance to Gratian; and, in concert with the provincials, appointed Maximus, a Spaniard by birth, but then in the Roman service in Britain, to be their emperor in his stead.³ As both the dignity and life of the new sovereign were insecure until victory had confirmed the usurpation, he strengthened himself by the services of a great body of British youth, and with these he passed into Gaul. Many wonders have been fabled of his levies, and of the fatal effects of their absence from the island. Many legends of the most ridiculous nature have been appended, which grave historians have believed.⁴

* Bede postpones the invasions of the Picts and Scots, and the coming of the legions, until after Constantine. I have considered attentively the reasonings of his ingenious editor in his behalf, but I cannot coincide in his opinion. See Smith's Bede, App. p. 672.

³ See Gibbon, iii. p. 5. His diligence supersedes the necessity of original references.

⁴ See Usher, 617—636. Ib. 200. This affair, as stated by Jeffry, l. 5. c. 14. is, that Maximus ordered 100,000 common people and 30,000 soldiers out of Britain, to colonize Armorica; c. 15. he desired wives for them; and c. 16. the king of Cornwall sent Ursula, his beautiful daughter, with 11,000

noble ladies, and 60,000 meaner women, who embarked at London. Great storms drowned part, and Guanius king of the Huns, and Melga king of the Picts, murdered the others, who resolved to be virtuous. Johan Major will have Ursula to be the daughter of the Scottish king, that Scotland may have the credit of her story. A lady settles the point by averring, that Verena, one of the virgins, assured her, in an express revelation, that the blessed Ursula was a Scots woman; her convenient visions also authenticated their relicts!! Vision Elizabeth, l. 4. c. 2. Usher Primord. 618—624. Baronius, who with others countenances the emigration, mentions, that the Martyrologies de-

Gratian was the victim of this rebellion, and Maximus retained the purple until ambition stimulated him to contest with Theodosius. The superior ability of the emperor of the East avenged the death of his unfortunate patron. The British soldiers did not long survive the usurper they befriended; but that they wandered into Armorica, and new-named it, seems to be unfounded.⁵

In 391, the generous Theodosius delivered the sceptre of the western empire to Valentinian, who marched into Gaul against the Franks. He renewed the ancient leagues with them, but perished by the weapon of a murderer in 392. A new adventurer for empire, Eugenius, assumed his dignity, made new treaties with the Franks and Alemanni, collected troops from all parts to maintain the exalted station he had ventured to seize, and advanced to defy the genius of Theodosius. In 394, he sustained a destructive combat near Aquileia, which terminated his ambition and his life.⁶

The next year was marked by the death of Theodosius himself; and, at his death, the Roman glory began to set. His two sons lived only to disgrace him. The western hemisphere was possessed by Honorius, the youngest son of Theodosius, who, in January 395, at the age of eleven, became master of an empire, almost besieged by enemies; Italy, Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, looked up to him for protection,⁷ and in turns demanded it: while Arcadius, his brother, filled the throne of the East. A minister able to have upheld a falling state directed the young mind of Honorius.

395.

voted the 11th October to the memory of Ursula and the 71,000. Some affirm, that no person can be buried at Cologne, in the place where they were said to have lain, because the ground throws up other corpses, which some deny!! Usher, 202 and 993.

⁵ This point has been much controverted, but I cannot avoid agreeing with Du Bos, that quant aux tems ou la peuplade des Bretons insulaires s'est établié dans les Gaules, it was not before the year 513. Hist. Crit. ii. 470. The chronicle of the

abbey of Mont S. Michel gives this year. Anno 513, venerunt transmarini Britanni in Armoricam, id est minorem Britanniam. Ib. 472. The ancient Saxon poet, ap. Duchesne Hist. Fran. Script. 2. p. 148, also peoples Bretagne after the Saxon conquest.

⁶ 1 Mascou, 371—373. 3 Gibbon, 56—64. A very exalted and interesting character of Theodosius is drawn by Aurel. Victor, 1 Hist. Rom. Script. 635. folio edit.

⁷ 3 Gibbon, 104.

BOOK

I.

Stilicho, his appointed guardian, passed the Alps soon after the new accession, reviewed the garrisons on the Rhine, and negotiated with the Germans. During the progress of the same year he marched the legions of the empire along the coast of the Hadriatic, to punish the guilty favourite, who was diffusing misery through the East. In November, the fate of Rufinus delivered Stilicho from a competitor, and the world from a subordinate tyrant, who converted a trust of power into an instrument of base oppression.⁸

But the enemy that was destined to shake the Roman empire to its foundation, and to give the signal of successful onset to the barbarians who were crowding to encompass it, began now to appear. Superior genius frequently produces great revolutions on the theatre of the world, when it is placed in the sphere of command. Empires rise to grandeur by the potent springs which that only can set in action; but when these have spent their force, and a new potentate appears, gifted with the same creative powers; the scenes of greatness change, the descendants of the illustrious are destroyed, and new edifices of sovereignty are erected, to tower, to menace, and to fall, like those on whose ruins they exist. Such was Alaric, who, at the close of the fourth century, united under his sovereignty the strength of the Gothic nation.

Rise of
Alaric.

376. In this year, the western world had been alarmed by the irruption of the Huns.⁹ After swelling their army by the nations they conquered, they had rushed on the Gothic tribes.

⁸ Gibbon, 117—120. Claudian has punished the vices of Rufinus by a fine effusion of heroic satire. His description of the council of the calamities of mankind is a living picture:

“ Nutrix Discordia belli,
Imperiosa Fames, Leto vicina Senectus,
Impatiens que sui Morbus, Livorque secundis
Anxius, et scisso mœrens velamine Luctus,
Et Timor et cæco preceps Audacia vultu,
Et Luxus populator opum, quem semper ad-
hærens
Infelix humili gressu comitatur Egestas,

Fœda que Avaritiæ complexæ pectora matris
Insomnes longo veniunt examine Curæ.”

In. Ruf. l. 1. p. 21. Elz. ed.

⁹ Their history is ably abridged by Mr. Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 561; he traces their unsuccessful contests with the Chinese, their divisions and emigrations, their conquests, the union of the Alani, and their wars upon the Goths. One of their ancient historians, Jornandes, c. 24. gives their execranda origine, that is, veneficarum cum immundis spiritibus congressu. M. de Guignes leads the way on their history.

Unable to repulse the ferocious invaders, the Goths had precipitated themselves over the Danube. Stationed by the emperor Valens in lower Mœsia, the Goths had revolted, had penetrated into Thrace, defeated and killed their imperial benefactor, in 378, at Hadrianople, and from this disastrous day never abandoned the Roman territory.¹⁰ At length Theodosius had made an accommodation with them; a large portion of their warriors had been taken into the imperial service, and a successful attempt had been made to convert them to the Christian faith.

Among the Goths, who were allied to the Roman armies, Alaric passed his youth. Born in the island of Peuce¹¹, on the Euxine, of one of the principal families of the Goths,¹² he had early abandoned the confined limits of his native soil for the civilized regions of Europe. He solicited an appointment in the Roman armies, and he was only entrusted with the command of barbarian battalions. Though by birth a barbarian himself, he felt the superiority of his assuming mind, and was disgusted by the degradation. In Thrace, in Macedonia, and in Thessaly, he shewed the terrors of his discontent; he obtained the passage of the immortalized Thermopylæ, overran Bœotia, Attica, and the Peloponnesus; and though his superstition protected Athens from his fury, the other famed cities in Greece; Corinth, Argos, and Sparta, alas, how degenerated! were conquered by his valour, his fortune, or his name.¹³ When Stilicho advanced with the imperial troops, to chastise the daring invader, by a great exertion of skill, Alaric escaped to Epirus, and extorted from the timid ministers of the Byzantine court the title and authority of governor of the Eastern Illyricum. He was soon after recognized king of the Visigoths.¹⁴

396.

¹⁰ Gibbon, ii. p. 591—617. Ib. 640.

¹¹ Claud. de 6 Consul. Hon. p. 174. Peuce is an island at the mouth of the Danube, formed by two of its discharging torrents. Strabo, p. 211. Dionys. Periegetes, v. 301.

¹² Jornandes says of Alaric, "Secunda nobilitas Baltharum que ex genere origo mirifica," &c.

¹³ Zosimus, l. 5. p. 292—295. Yet let not the historian's apology for Sparta be forgotten, "nec armis amplius nec idoneus ad pugnam viris munita propter Romanorum avaritiam."

¹⁴ The history of Alaric is narrated by Gibbon, v. 3. p. 134.

BOOK

I.

Gildas compared with the imperial writers.

With these recollections of the Roman history, we may proceed to contrast the loose phrases of Gildas with the circumstances we can glean from the Greek and Latin writers which seem applicable to the British history.

Immediately after mentioning the death of Maximus, Gildas states,¹⁵ that Britain, despoiled of her soldiery and military apparatus, and her youth, who followed the usurper to return no more; and being utterly ignorant of war, groaned for many years under the incursions of the Scots from the north-west,¹⁶ and of the Picts from the north.

This account is befriended by the imperial history. It is stated by Sozomen, that Maximus collected a numerous army from Britain, Gaul, and Germany, and went to Italy.¹⁷ We learn from others, that the Franks took advantage of his absence to invade Gaul, and that the Saxons also moved in successful hostility against him.¹⁸ During the reign of his prosperity, in the second year of his empire, the Picts and Scots had vigorously defied him.¹⁹ It becomes, therefore, highly probable, that these Irish and Caledonian wanderers would be alert to profit by the opportunity of his absence, as well as the Franks and Saxons. On this occasion we shall accredit Gildas, and as Maximus was killed at Aquileia in 388,²⁰ we may consider that as the year in which the incursions began.

¹⁵ Gildas, f. 11, p. 4. Gale's xv Scriptores. Richard, entitled of Cirencester by some, by others Monk of Westminster, places this invasion in the year after the death of Maximus, l. 2. c. 1. See his *de Situ Britanniae* in the *Antiquitates Celto-normannicae*, p. 120. Ado. Viennensis, an author of the ninth century, gives a similar chronology. *Chron. Aetas Sexta*, p. 353. *Bib. Mag. Patrum*, v. 7. —Bede, without any authority, and contrary to the literal meaning of Gildas, postpones it for above twenty years, l. 1. c. 12. and thus lays a foundation for his subsequent mistakes.

¹⁶ The *Circius*, which is the expression of Gildas, is mentioned by Pliny, 2. 46. as a wind famous in the province of Narbonne, and inferior in vehemence to none. Harduin interprets it, *nord-west-nord*.

¹⁷ "Collecto ex Britannia et vicinis Gallis, et ex Germanis ac finitimis gentibus

numeroso exercitu, in Italiam profectus est." Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* l. 7. c. 13. p. 721. Ed. Vales.

¹⁸ The valuable fragment of Sulpitius Alexander, preserved by Gregory of Tours, l. c. c. 9. p. 34. mentions the Francic incursion; and St. Ambrose, ep. 17. intimates, though with no particulars, the Saxon success. "Ille statim a Francis, a Saxonum gente in Sicilia Siciæ et Petavione ubique denique terrarum victus est." 1 Mascou, 371.

¹⁹ Prosper in his *Chronicon* says, "incur-santes Pictos et Scotos, Maximus strenue superavit." See it annexed to Eusebius *Chron. prior*, p. 49, in the edition of the great Scaliger. Fordun also mentions this. *Scot. Hist.* p. 616.

²⁰ 3 Gibbon, 40. The British history miscals him Maximian, and kills him at Rome, l. 5. c. 16.

The next account of Gildas is, that the British nation, unable to endure these ravages, sent an embassy to Rome, desiring a military force, and promising a faithful obedience to the imperial sceptre.²¹ That a province suffering under a hostile invasion should solicit succour from the fountain of power, and that to obtain it they should lavish assurances of fidelity, to expiate the imputation of treason, which the elevation of Maximus would produce, are circumstances which bear the marks of truth in their extreme probability.

He adds, that a legion came by sea, well appointed with every requisite for service; that, engaging with the enemy, they destroyed a great multitude, drove them from the borders, and liberated the subjected natives from their rapacity and tyranny.²²

If we inquire of the imperial writers by whom this service was performed, we shall find that for three years after the fate of Maximus, both divisions of the Roman empire were governed by Theodosius,²³ who, by his edict, made void all the usurper's exertions of the prerogative, that every thing might resume its pristine situation.²⁴ It was a necessary consequence of these orders, that the civil powers of the revolted provinces should be immediately replaced: we accordingly find that a Vicarius was sent to Britain by Theodosius, whose good conduct was admired.²⁵ No other period seems to have been more suitable to his administration.²⁶

But from the time of Constantine the policy of the emperors had completely separated the civil and military powers.²⁷ This

²¹ Gildas, f. 12.

²² Ibid.

²³ Gibbon, iii. p. 55.

²⁴ Cod. Theod. l. 15. tit. 14.

²⁵ Socrates, Hist. Eccles. l. 7. c. 12. This temperate expression of Socrates, ἐθρυμύσθη, was construed by Carte to imply the attainment of such a height of glory, that he must have stopped the Scottish depredations, p. 169. Our Henry also amplifies it so far as to say, that Chrysanthus was sent on purpose to check them, that he executed his commission with great ability and success, expelled the enemies, and restored the tranquillity of the province. He refers to Socra-

tes as his authority, who only mentions what the text expresses.

²⁶ The remark of Carte is just, that in no other juncture could Theodosius have intermeddled in the affairs of the western empire, p. 169.

²⁷ 2 Gibbon, 43. Du Bos, Hist. Crit. i. 60. Le prefet du pretoire, et les officiers qui lui etoient subordonnés, ne commandent plus les troupes.—The Vicarius of Britain was under the præfectus prætorio of the Gauls, Notitia, f. 36. and was a civil officer.

regulation could not allow Chrysanthus to have been the deliverer of Britain. The military arm was wielded by an arrangement of officers jealously distinguished from the civil authority.²⁸ Chrysanthus may have governed Britain as Vicarius, to diffuse internal quiet over a revolted province, as far as the civil magistracy was able to operate, but could have no forces to coerce the menacing barbarians.

During the latter period of the reign of Theodosius, and for many years in the reign of his successor, the military force of the western empire was under the command of Stilicho, the master-general of the cavalry and infantry of the West.²⁹ It must have been under him that every military aid was dispatched into Britain.

The indistinct intimations of the Monk of Bangor are confirmed by Claudian; his mellifluous muse devoted herself to pursue the triumphs, and to proclaim the glory of Stilicho; and in Claudian's historic picture of his fame, the victorious battles of this superior man with the Picts and Scots, form one of those groupes, which, for this part of his life, have ensured to Stilicho an honourable celebrity.³⁰

But the desired euphony and imagery of poetry, are unfriendly to geographical and chronological detail. We must not, therefore, expect, from Claudian, the exact year of the Christian æra in which Stilicho or his officers approached Ireland and Caledonia. We must endeavour to trace the chronology from other sources.

Britain, according to Gildas, mourned these devastations many years. A probable interval seems to arise from the situation of the empire. Though Maximus was conquered in 388, yet the Franks and Saxons continued in hostility. When Valentinian, who was sent against them into Gaul, was mur-

²⁸ Even Julien, when sent to command the army in Gaul, though he, en qualité de Cesar, ou d'heritier presomptif de l'empire, put pretendre a une autorité plus étendue que celle qu'un generalissime ordinaire auroit exercée en vertu de sa commission, cepen-

dant Julien n'osoit rien decider concernant la levée des subsides et la subsistance des troupes. Du Bos, 61.

²⁹ 3 Gibbon, 116.

³⁰ Claudian de Laud, Stil. l. 2. p. 140. Elz. edit.

dered, the usurpation of Eugenius harassed the empire for two years. Soon after he had perished, Theodosius expired.

The death of Rufinus left Stilicho at leisure, in the year 396. The African war was not prosecuted till 398, in which Gildo fell;³¹ therefore we may consider either the preceding years, or the subsequent, 399, as the æra in which Britain was rescued from the spoilers.³² This last will allow eleven years for the multos annos which Gildas notes to have intervened between the invasion after Maximus and its suppression.

The querulous narration adds, that the Romans ordered the natives to build a wall between the two seas, in the north of Britain, to deter the invaders, and to protect the natives; that the irrational vulgar, having no director, constructed it of turf instead of stone.³³

This narration has the appearance of being an ignorant account of the construction of one of those famous walls, which have so deservedly attracted the curiosity of antiquaries.

Gildas states, that this legion having returned home, the plunderers came again.³⁴ A passage in Claudian verifies the fact, that the legion quitted the wall soon after the successes of Stilicho, and diffuses a ray of light, which determines the chronology of the incident.

We have mentioned the pacification which Alaric extorted from the eastern government: it might seem to them a release from anxiety; it was made by Alaric an interval of earnest preparation for more fortunate warfare. He surveyed the state of the world with the eyes of prophetic penetration, and

³¹ Gibbon, iii. p. 128.

³² Richard places it eleven years before the capture of Rome by Alaric, or 399, l. 2. c. 1. p. 121. Antiq. Celto-Nor. The criticism of Mascou, p. 394, on Pagius, who dates a similar passage in 402, confirms our Richard's chronology, as it makes 399 the year in which Honorius was preparing the expeditions alluded to in the lines

Domito quod Saxone Tethys
Mitior, aut fracto segura Britannia Picto

Ante pedes humili Franco, &c.

In Eutrop. p. 196.

³³ Gildas, f. 12.

³⁴ Gildas, f. 13. The peculiarity of style in which he indulges himself is remarkable: "Rabid robber wolves, with profound hunger and dry jaws, leaping into the sheep-fold," are the invaders who are brought over by "the wings of oars, and the arms of rowers, and sails swelling in the wind."

discerned the vulnerable part, in which the genius of Rome might be fatally assailed. About the year 400, he suddenly marched from his eastern settlements to the Julian Alps, and poured his forces into Italy. The emperor of the West fled at his approach, when Stilicho again interposed the shield of superior talents. To meet the destructive Goths with a competent force, he summoned the Roman troops out of Germany and Gaul into Italy; even the legion which had been stationed to guard the wall of Britain against the Caledonians was hastily recalled, and attended the imperial general at Milan.³⁵ In the battle of Pollentia, Alaric discovered the inferiority of his troops, and made a bold but ruinous retreat.³⁶

The battle of Pollentia was fought in March 403. We must allow time for the troops to have travelled from the north of Britain to Milan, and may date this departure of the Roman legion in the year 402. No one can disbelieve that in their absence the habitual depredators would return.

Gildas proceeds to inform us, that ambassadors went to Rome with rent garments, and with ashes on their heads, to implore further aid.³⁷ However we may be inclined to ascribe the costume of the embassy to the imagination of the author, we cannot dispute the probable fact, that the province solicited and obtained the protection of its sovereign.

We have no direct evidence from the imperial writers that Stilicho sent back the legion, after the battle of Pollentia, into Britain, but it must have been there before 406, because we read of soldiers then chusing and deposing emperors in the island. Their presence must have been attended with its usual effect on the Picts and Scots.³⁸

Before we state the next sentence of Gildas, it will be proper to narrate the incidents, which, as he does not notice, though of

³⁵ Claudian, in his poem de Bello Getico, p. 169 :—

Venit et extremis legio prætenta Britannis,
Quæ Scoto dat fræna truci, ferro que notatas
Perlegit exangues Picto moriente figuras.

³⁶ 3 Gibben, 147—155.

³⁷ Gildas, f. 14.

³⁸ For the origin and history of these two nations, the reader may usefully consult Mr. Pinkerton's Inquiry into the early history of Scotland.

principal importance, we may presume he never knew: they occurred between this last defeat of the Picts and Scots, and the final departure of the Romans.

CHAP.
VII.

The unwearied genius of Claudian has resounded the praise of Stilicho in poetry, which, though sometimes defective in taste, yet has too much energy and felicity to perish. The acts which the general achieved, justify his bard, and raise the minister above his degenerate countrymen. But it may be said of human virtue, as Solon pronounced to Cræsus of human happiness, that we should wait until the life is closed before we pronounce decisively upon it. Stilicho for a while was the saviour of the Roman empire; he ended his career its most destructive scourge. He excited invasions, which he wished to have the merit of repressing; he introduced the barbarian hordes into the provinces, who quitted them no more; he occasioned rebellions which completed the debility of the imperial government; and paved the way for the complete extinction of the western empire.

When Alaric menaced Italy, Stilicho drove off the tempest; but he wanted to have his son invested with the imperial dignity, and he hoped to extort the concession from the trembling Honorius, by the terror of impending evils. To effect this, he excited the German nations to invade Gaul.³⁹ Fatal contri-

Desolation
of Gaul.

³⁹ Orosius, l. 7. c. 38. and c. 40. and from him Isidorus, Wandal. Grotius, p. 732. expressly affirm the treason. Jerom Ep. ad Ager. exclaims against the semi-barbarian traitor, who armed, against his adopted country, its worst enemies. Prosper says, that saluti imperatoris tendebat insidias, p. 50.—Marcellinus more explicitly says of him, "Spreto Honorio, regnumque ejus inhians, Alanorum, Suevorum, Wandalorum que gentes donis pecuniisque illectas contra regnum Honorii excitavit, Eucherium filium suum paganum, et adversum Christianos insidias molientem, cupiens Cæsarem ordinare." Chron. p. 37. added to Scaliger's Euseb.—If these authors are not sufficient to make the imputation credible, the point seems to be decided by the evidence of a

contemporary, who, being a pagan, gives more weight to an opinion, in which he and the Christians coincide; I mean Rutilius, whom Gibbon does not mention; he says,

Quo magis est facinus diri Stilichonis
acerbum,

Proditor arcani quod fuit imperii.

Romano generi dum nititur esse superstes,
Crudelis summis miscuit ima furor:

Dumque timet, quidquid se fecerat ipse
timeri,

Immisit Latiae barbara tela neci.

Visceribus nudis armatum condidit hostem,
Illatae cladis liberiore dolo.

Ipsa satellitibus pellitis Roma patebat,
Et captiva prius, quam caperetur, erat.

Itinerarium, l. 2. v. 41—50.

BOOK

I.

vance of unprincipled ambition!" A most formidable irruption of the tribes between the Rhine and Danube, Alani, Suevi, Vandali, and many others, burst over the mountains, and deluged the western world. A portion of these, under Radagaisus, perished before Stilicho in Italy,⁴⁰ and furnished him with the laurels he coveted. The remainder crossed the Rhine, which, if the charge of treason be true, was purposely divested of its protecting troops, and overwhelmed Gaul and its vicinity. "The consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul; that rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, was delivered to the barbarians, who drove before them, in a promiscuous crowd, the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoils of their houses and altars."⁴¹

406.

Revolt of
the troops
in Britain.
Constantine
chosen.

This dreadful disaster spread consternation through Britain. Inflamed with their success, the barbarians menaced this island. It is expressly asserted by Zosimus, that their devastations alarmed the army in Britain. Apprehensive of their further progress, and to exert an energy adequate to the crisis, the troops created an emperor for themselves. One Marcus was their first choice: finding his councils or his conduct insufficient for the exigency, they destroyed him, and elected Gratian, who is mentioned with the title of Municeps, in his room. Within four months afterwards he was murdered, and, induced by the flattering name, the British soldiery selected one Constantine from the ranks, and decorated him with the imperial garments.⁴²

Constantine
leaves Bri-
tain.

406.

Constantine seems not to have been unworthy of his station;⁴³ he passed out of Britain into Gaul, stayed a short

⁴⁰ Gibbon extends his shield in defence of Stilicho, but the weight of evidence must pierce the protection. Du Bos, p. 190, accredits his guilt. How fatal the scheme was to Rome, we may judge, when we recollect, that, "le dernière Decembre, 406, fut la journée funeste ou les barbares entrerent dans les Gaules, pour n'en plus sortir." Du Bos, 194.

⁴¹ For the expedition of Radagaisus, see Gibbon, 163—173. and Mascou, 404—411.

⁴² 3 Gibbon, 171.

⁴³ Zosimus, l. 6. p. 373, and 371. Orosius, 7. 40.

⁴⁴ Zosimus, ib.

time at Boulogne, conciliated to his interest the soldiers scattered upon the continent, and defeated the terrible barbarians.⁴⁵

The authority of Constantine was acknowledged in Gaul, 406-411. and he reduced Spain. His son Constans laid aside the cowl of a monk, which, previous to his father's elevation, he had assumed,⁴⁶ and was created Cæsar. Honorius, to whom Constantine had respectfully stated, that his dignity had been forced upon him, appeared to acquiesce in his retaining it, and sent him the imperial robes.⁴⁷ The barbarians obtained reinforcements, but Constantine adopted the precautionary measure of placing troops to guard the passages into Gaul.⁴⁸

During this division of the imperial power, Alaric again assembled a willing army, and appeared on the Roman frontier. The guilt of Stilicho had been detected and punished, and his death removed the last bulwark of the empire. The court of Honorius could furnish no other mind competent to confront the Gothic conqueror. In 408, he overwhelmed resistance, and besieged Rome. A ransom obtained a short security, but determined his superiority. In the next year he assailed it again, and condescended to accept from an emperor of his own nomination the title of master general. Every doubt was now removed; he saw his irresistible power, and the succeeding summer was marked by the dismal catastrophe of a third siege and successful assault,⁴⁹ whose ferocious cruelties we might notice with abhorrence, but that the generals of civilized ages chuse yet to perpetrate them in contempt of the inevitable opinion of posterity!

Among the officers attached to the interest of Constantine was Gerontius, who had proceeded from Britain. The valour and services of this person on former occasions are stated by

⁴⁵ Marcellin. Com. p. 38. Orosius, 7. 40. Jornandes, c. 32.

⁴⁶ Yet Frigeridus, cited by Gregory of Tours, characterizes him as gulæ et ventri deditus, l. 1. c. 9.

⁴⁷ Zosim. l. 5. p. 359.

⁴⁸ Zosim. p. 374.

⁴⁹ 3 Gibbon, 241—244.

411.

The barba-
rians attack
Britain.

409.

the historians; but, offended that Constans returned to Spain, on his second visit, with another as his general, the slighted Gerontius abandoned the interests of the emperor he had supported, and elevated a friend to dethrone him.⁵⁰ He pursued his new purpose with a fatal alacrity, besieged and slew Constans at Vienne,⁵¹ and menaced the father with deposition. The troops of the legal emperor, Honorius, profited by the quarrel, and destroyed the competition. Constantine was taken at Arles, and Gerontius was pursued to the confines of Spain; his house was besieged, and his resistance occasioned the assailants to set it on fire. His friend and wife received from his hands the death they implored, and he joined them in the tomb.⁵²

Amid this complexity of rebellion and sub-rebellion, the western provinces of the Roman state were sacrificed to the revenge of the military competitors. The crime which degraded all the merit of Stilicho was, from the same motives of selfishness, repeated by Gerontius. He also, to diminish the danger of his revolt, by his incitements and advice influenced into hostile invasion the barbarians who hovered near the Celtic regions.⁵³ This desperate act of ambition was unfortunate for Rome. Constantine could not repel the torrent,

⁵⁰ Zosim. 371. 373—375.

⁵¹ Orosius, l. 7. Olympiodorus ap. Photium, 183. Marcellin. Chron. 38. Eusebius Chronicon, 412.

⁵² See the detail in Gibbon, iii. p. 259.

I am tempted to imagine, that in drawing his Vortigern, Jeffry has copied and distorted the Gerontius of the imperialists. Some particulars are alike in both. He makes Constans a monk, and Vortigern a British consul,—who rebelled against, and caused Constans to be destroyed. Vortigern being afterwards besieged in the place to which he fled, and his pursuers finding they could not get an entrance, it was set on fire, l. 6. and l. 8.—Gerontius proceeded from Britain, and was a comes or count; he revolted from Constans, who had been in a monastery, and caused his death; he fled for refuge afterwards, and prevented his pursuers from entering his house, who therefore applied

flames. These coincidences would induce me to strike Vortigern entirely out of true history, but that I find a Gurthrigernus mentioned in Gildas, and a Gwrtheyrn in the Welsh remains. Their authority inclines me to believe, that Jeffry has confounded Gerontius, who died in Spain, with Gwrtheyrn, in England, and given us a medley history of both, collected into the factitious character of Vortigern.

⁵³ Zosimus, l. 6. p. 375. There was a severe imperial law in existence, made A.D. 323, which was applicable to these crimes of Gerontius and Stilicho: "Si quis barbaris scelerata factione facultatem depredationis in Romanos dederit, vel si quo alio modo factam deviserit, vivus amburatur." Cod. Theod. l. 7. tit. 1. But ambition is always blind to its punishment, and as heedless of laws, as of morality.

because the flower of his army was in Spain.⁵⁴ Britain and Gaul experienced all its fury. The cities of the island were invaded. To whatever quarter they applied for help, the application was vain. Honorius was trembling before Alaric, and Constantine could not even save Gaul.

In this extremity the Britons displayed a magnanimous character; they remembered the ancient independence of the island, and their brave ancestors, who still lived ennobled in the verses of their bards: they armed themselves, threw off the foreign yoke, deposed the imperial magistrates, proclaimed their insular independence, and, with the successful valour of youthful liberty and endangered existence, they drove the fierce invaders from their cities.⁵⁵ The sacred flame of national independence passed swiftly over the channel, and electrified Armorica. This maritime state, and its immediate neighbours, in the same crisis and from the same necessity, disclaimed the authority of a foreign emperor, and by their own exertions achieved their own deliverance.

Thus the authentic history from 407 is, that the barbarians, excited by Gerontius, burst in terror upon Gaul and Britain; that Constantine could give no help, because his troops were in Spain; that Honorius could send none, because Alaric was overpowering Italy; that the Britons, thus abandoned, armed themselves, declared their country independent, and drove the barbaric invaders from their cities; that Honorius sent letters to the British states, exhorting them to protect themselves;⁵⁶ and that the Romans never again recovered the possession of the island.⁵⁷

409.

⁵⁴ Zosimus, l. 6. p. 375.

⁵⁵ Zosimus, p. 376; and see Nemius, f. 25—27.

⁵⁶ Zosimus, l. 6. p. 381. φυλάττεισθαι.

⁵⁷ The Abbe Du Bos, Hist. Crit. 211. and Mr. Gibbon, iii. 275. agree in placing the defection and independence of Britain in 409. The words of Procopius are express, that the Romans never recovered Britain, l. 1. p. 9. Grôt.—Prosper, in his Chronicon, intimates as much. In the year before the fall of Constantine, he says, Hac tempestate,

præ valetudine Romanorum, vires funditus attenuatæ Britannia, p. 50. Scal. Euseb.—Bede, though he afterwards copies Gildas with mistaken chronology, yet, l. 1. c. 11. after mentioning the capture of Rome by Alaric, adds, ex quo tempore Romani in Britannia regnare cessarunt, after having reigned in it 470 years since Cæsar. Now in c. 2. he says, Cæsar came 60 ant. Chr. therefore according to Bede, in this passage, the Romans lost the government of Britain by the year 410.

To these authentic facts we know not how to adapt the ignorant lamentations of Gildas. We must not forget, that he who has left us an account of men sitting on the wall to be pulled down; of the British nation cut up by the Picts and Scots, like sheep by butchers; of the country becoming but the residence of wild animals; of the silly letter sent to Ætius, stating that they were drowned or massacred; of part of the natives enslaving themselves to the barbarians, to get victuals; of the remainder turning robbers on mountains, caves, and woods; has also declared that the Britons, whom the Romans for near four centuries civilized, could not build a wall, nor make arms without patterns;⁵⁸ has stated nothing of the emperors, or transactions after Maximus; and has ascribed the walls of Hadrian and Severus to the fifth century, and the castles of the Saxon shore, to a legion quitting Britain for ever. As far as Gildas can be supported and made intelligible by others, he is an acceptable companion. But he contains so much ignorant and exaggerated narration, that he cannot be trusted alone.

⁵⁸ Gildas, f. 12. and f. 14.

CHAP. VIII.

The History of Britain, between the Departure of the Romans and the Invasion of the Saxons.

WHEN Zosimus quits the history of Britain, he leaves the natives in a state of independence on Rome, so generally armed as to have achieved the exploits of Roman soldiers, and to have driven the invaders from their cities. The governing powers of the island seem to have been, at that period, the civitates or the territorial districts, because the emperor would of course have written to the predominant authority. This was the state of the island in or after the year 410, and to this we may add from others, that the Romans never regained the possession of it.¹ There is evidence that they assailed the liberties of Armorica,² but none that they contested with the Britons the enjoyment of their independence.

CHAP.
VIII.

¹ Mr. Camden makes Britain return to the subjection of Honorius, and to be happy for a while under Victorinus, who governed the province, and put a stop to the inroads of the Picts and Scots. Introd. 85. Henry, l. 1. c. 1. p. 119. 8vo. enlarges still more; he states, that after the death of Constantine, Britain returned to the obedience of Honorius, who sent Victorinus with some troops for its recovery and defence. This general struck terror into all his enemies in this island; but the increasing distresses of the empire obliged Honorius to recal Victorinus, and all his troops, from the island.—What is the authority for this circumstantial detail? Audite judices! Rutilius, in his journey in Italy about 416, takes occasion to compliment Victorinus on his former honours. In this friendly digression he says, the ferox Britannus knew his virtues, whom he had governed so as to excite their attachment. Itiner. 499. p. 14. ed. Amst. Whether he governed it under Theodosius or Honorius

is not said. That he could have no command of troops is certain, because the vicarius or governor was a civil officer. The act of his government, according to Rutilius, was not then a recent thing, but at some distance, because he adds another event, which, he says, lately happened, “*illustris nuper sacræ comes additus aulæ*,” marking this honour as a recent event in 416, implies, that the others were not recent; hence there is no reason to place him in Britain after 409.

² Du Bos, Hist. Crit. p. 213. thinks, that the revolt of Armorica contributed more than any other event to establish la monarchie Française in Gaul. Armorica comprehended five of the seventeen provinces of Gaul. On its struggles for liberty, see Du Bos, and 1 Mascou, 453. 476. also 3 Gibbon, 275.—It had afterwards many unfavourable conflicts with the Franks. Greg. Tours. l. 4 & 5. Freculphus, l. 2. c. 22.

BOOK

I.

The Britons, who had been strong enough to repulse from their island the barbarians who had overran Gaul, or who had taken advantage of that calamity to molest them, could not have been subdued without a serious invasion. Even the exposed and inferior Armorica maintained a vigorous resistance. But the dismal aspect of the Roman state, during the fifth century, coincides with the absolute silence of authors to prove that the Romans forbore to invade the British independence.

The majesty of the Capitol had departed; the world no longer crouched in submission before it; and even its own subjects are said to have rejoiced over its ruin. The Goths conquered Spain; a rebel arose from the tomb of Honorius; another general repeated the treason of Stilicho, and the terrible Genseric embarked with his Vandals against Africa: even Ætius was a subject of dubious fidelity; at the head of 60,000 barbarians he extorted his dignity; he maintained his connection with the Huns and Alaric, and had to withstand the Franks and Suevi. The son of Alaric besieged Narbonne, the Belgic provinces were invaded by the Burgundians, and the desolating Attila at last burst upon Gaul.¹

But whatever was the cause which induced Honorius to permit, or withheld his successors from molesting, the independence of Britain, it was an event which promised to be beneficial to every class of its inhabitants. The Romans had, in the beginning of their conquests in Britain, from motives of self-preservation, endeavoured to civilize it. When by their incentives the national mind had been diverted from habits of warfare to the enjoyments of luxury and the pursuits of commerce, the natives shared in the prosperity, the vices, and the institutions of the governing empire. At the end of the fourth century they must have also participated in the evils which distant provinces always endure from a weak or negligent administration, and which it is particularly attested to us that the western provinces then experienced.

¹ See Gibbon, iii. p. 262—271, and 327—432.

It is impossible to read of the distresses which arose from the uncontrolled rapacity of the officers of the revenue, and the corrupt inequality of their arbitrary impositions, without feeling the advantages which the independence of the island must have imparted to the inhabitants. The state of the population of Gaul has been painted to us by a contemporary, and in that we may contemplate the miseries of Britain; it is a striking panegyric on our present constitution, which entrusts the regulation of the revenue to the representative branch, and not to the caprice or corruption of unprincipled agents.

CHAP.
VIII.

“ The weight of oppression generates two consequences ;
“ it excites the people to aspire at liberty, and it prevents
“ them from obtaining it : they dread foreign enemies less
“ than their tax-gatherers. It is the inequality of the imposi-
“ tions, which makes their severity so poignant. The just
“ burthens of the rich are laid upon the poor. Judge from
“ what they pay, and you would think them rich ; look at
“ what they possess, and you will see that they are miserable :
“ the indigent are assessed as if they were wealthy ; the taxes
“ laid upon the rich are levied from the poor. To the most
“ barbarous nations this injustice is unknown ; hence, they
“ whom the Goths have subdued, wish never to return to the
“ Roman administration.

State of the
Roman pro-
vinces.

“ Can we then wonder at the success of these nations ?
“ People migrate from every quarter to some of these states,
“ and they do not repent the change : they choose rather to
“ live free in the appearance of captivity, than to remain
“ enslaved under the semblance of liberty ; hence the name
“ of Roman citizen, once so prized and so purchased, is
“ shunned and despised ; they who do not actually fly to the
“ barbarians, are compelled to be such in their hearts. In
“ this state is a great part of Spain, and no small part of

BOOK
I.

The Bagaudæ.

"Gaul. Indeed, the Roman iniquity has compelled the Roman world to be no longer Romans."⁴

A more striking feature of the distress of the Roman provinces cannot be given, than in the assertion that the Bagaudæ,⁵ a sort of military robbers who infested the country, were composed of Roman citizens, compelled by every oppression to desert their country and their duties. "Are not people made Bagaudæ by our iniquities, by the dishonesty of our judges, by the rapine and proscriptions of those who collect in the name of the public revenue, and pervert it to their own purposes?"⁶

These observations may satisfy us, that the Britons, once independent, armed, and victorious over their barbarian invaders, would not court the return of the Roman yoke: therefore every narration, which states, that they offered unconditional subjection to the Roman empire, after their independence, is marked with such extreme improbability, that the most clear, unequivocal, and determinate assertion of the fact by a faithful historian, can alone give it credence.

When we proceed to inquire into the events which followed the emancipation of Britain, the first question which naturally occurs to us is, on the government which the natives substituted to the imperial institutions.

Britain, under the Romans, contained two municipia, nine coloniae, ten civitates possessing the *Latio jure*, twelve stipendiariae, besides many other towns.⁷ It was usual with the Romans to partition their conquests into districts, called civitates. In Gaul, during the fifth century, there were one

⁴ This is the substance of some passages in Salvianus de Gubern. Dei, 5. Magn. Bibl. Patrum, p. 90—94. He was an ecclesiastic of Marseilles. Du Bos, i. 333—339. gives the extracts with a very liberal French translation.

⁵ Scaliger has a note on the Bagaudæ, Animad. Euseb. 243. Bagat, in the Armoric, is a troop or crew. Lhuyd Archæol. 196.

Bagach in Irish, is warlike. Bagach in Erse, is fighting. Bagad in Welsh, is multitude. Du Cange mentions *Bagaveiv*, vagare, and Boguedim, Hebrew for rebellis. Glos. Med. Lat. i. p. 432. See their history in Du Cange, ib. and Du Bos, p. 204.

⁶ Salvian, ubi supra, adds much more to the same effect.

⁷ Richard, p. 111. Antiq. Celto-Scand.

hundred and fifteen civitates; each of these had its capital city, in which resided a senate, whose jurisdiction extended over all the pagi which composed the territory of the civitas.⁸ Now if the seventeen provinces of Gaul had one hundred and fifteen civitates, the five provinces of Britain, which were as flourishing, might reasonably have had thirty-three, which is the number of the great towns enumerated by Richard.

We are, therefore, to consider Britain, in the latter periods of the Roman residence, divided into thirty-three civitates, of which thirty were in England and Wales. The chief towns were :⁹

Civitates of
Britain.

Municipia :	Latio jure donatæ :	Stipendariæ :
Verolanium,	Durnomagus,	Venta Silurum,
Eboracum.	Catarracton,	Venta Belgarum,
Coloniæ :	Cambodunum,	Venta Icenorum,
Londineium,	Coccium,	Segontium,
Camalodunum,	Luguballia,	Muridunum,
Rhutupis,	Ptoroton,	Ragæ,
Thermæ,	Victoria,	Cantiopolis,
Isca Secunda,	Theodosia,	Durinum,
Deva Getica,	Corinum,	Isca,
Glevum,	Sorbiodunum.	Bremenium,
Lindum,		Vindonum,
Camboricum.		Durobrovæ.

In each of these principal towns, the offices of power and dignity belonging to each civitas, were made residentiary; the duumviri, senates, decurions, curiæ, and ediles. These civitates were arranged under five provinces, two of which were governed by consulares, and three by presides. Above these provincial magistrates a Vicarius extended his over-ruling authority, subordinate only to a prætorian præfect, with whom the emperor preserved an immediate communication.¹⁰

The Vicarius and the provincial magistrates, or the consulares and presides, were foreigners. With such a jealous hand did

⁸ Du Bos, i. p. 2.

names in Mr. Whitaker's Manchester, vol. ii. 330—379.

⁹ Richard, ubi. sup. See the modern

¹⁰ 2 Gibbon, 32—38. Notitia, f. 49.

Rome maintain her empire, that no native was suffered to enjoy, in any case, the provincial administration; nor could the provincial officers, or their children, marry with a native, or purchase territorial property, slaves, or houses.¹¹ On the other hand, the municipal officers of the civitates seem to have been natives.

It was a point carefully guarded by law, that the officers of one civitas should not interfere with any other; hence the edict, that no duumviri should with impunity extend the power of their fasces, beyond the bounds of their own civitas.¹² The decurions served for the civitas of their nativity; and it was ordered, if to avoid the office any withdrew to another civitas, that he should be made to serve in both.¹³

We may, therefore, conceive England and Wales, in the fifth century, divided into thirty independent civitates, governed by native officers originating from each civitas. The imperial magistrates, whom Zosimus mentions that they deposed, were most likely the vicarius, the consulares, and the presides; and on their deposition, the island, as far as it was possessed by the Britons, would naturally divide into thirty independent republics; or, if this number be incorrect, into as many separate republics as there were civitates. That this event did happen we have a sort of evidence in the circumstance, that Honorius addressed his letters to the civitates of Britain.

But in addition to these civil powers, the influence of the ecclesiastical, must be taken into consideration. In Gaul, therefore most probably in Britain, every civitas had a bishop,¹⁴ and every province had a superior bishop, answerable to our metropolitans, though not distinguished with the title of archbishop. The bishops had some power, and from this enjoyed much consideration and credit in every district. The people in general were in two divisions, the free and the servile.

¹¹ 2 Gibbon, p. 39.

¹² Cod. Theod. l. 12. tit. 1. f. 174.

¹³ Cod. Theod. l. 12. tit. 1. f. 12.

¹⁴ Du Bos, i. p. 14.

Thus far the few facts left to us fairly extend. Independent Britain, after the year 410, contained many independent republics or civitates; each of these was governed by chief magistrates or duumviri, a senate, subordinate officers called decurions, an inferior senate called curiæ, with other necessary officers. The ecclesiastical concerns were regulated by a bishop in each, whose power sometimes extended into lay concerns.

But it is probable, that these thirty independent civitates did not long continue in peace with each other. We cannot suppose that the natives of each would always be contented with the legal power of the offices to which they were called; quietly lay down the fasces at the end of the year, if duumviri, or if senators, seek no more authority than belonged to their official acts, or if inferiors, aspire not unduly to an elevation of condition. The accidents of human life, would not fail to involve disputes of jurisdiction between one civitas and others: and mankind generally are eager to determine their differences by force. We cannot doubt that no long interval would ensue, before civil discord pervaded the island, nor that this would terminate in the predominance of military tyrants; because, in that most dreadful of all evils, civil fury, it is the sword which eventually prevails.

The lamentations of Gildas concur with the obscure intimations of Nennius to prove, that a considerable part of the interval, between the emancipation of the island and the arrival of the Saxons, was occupied in the contests of ambitious partisans.

Civil discord
in the island.

“The country,” says Gildas, “though weak against its foreign enemies, was brave and unconquerable in civil warfare. Kings were appointed, but not by God; they who were more cruel than the rest, attained to the high dignity.”

With as little right or expediency as they derived their power, they lost it. “They were killed, not from any examination of justice, and men more ferocious still were elected

“ in their place. If any happened to be more virtuous or
 “ mild than the rest, every degree of hatred and enmity was
 “ heaped upon them.”¹⁵ The clergy partook of the conten-
 tions of the day.

He renews this picture in his address to the British kings who had survived the Saxon invasion, and though his expressions are not elucidated by an historical detail, they make us feel strongly the expression of St. Jerome, “ Britain, a province fertile in tyrants,” and the assertion of Procopius, that it remained a long time under its tyrants.¹⁶

If the third invasion of the Picts, stated by Gildas, be not the last attack of the barbarians, mentioned by Zosimus, but a subsequent affair; if there be any truth in their exaggerated devastations, and in the application to Ætius, the account of the civil wars, which succeeded the Roman departure, give some intelligibility to the questionable narration. We can conceive, that when the strength of the country was not directed to its protection, but was wasted in civil conflicts, the hostilities of the Picts and Scots may have met with much success; not opposed by the force of the whole island, but by the local power of the particular civitas or district invaded, they may have defeated the opposition, and desolated the land of the northern borders: with equal success, from the same cause, the western regions of Britain may have been plundered by the Scots, and the southern by the Saxons. Some of the maritime states, abandoned by their more powerful countrymen, may have sought the aid of Ætius, as they afterwards accepted that of the Saxons; but we think the account of Gildas applicable only to particular districts, and not to the whole island.

Many Kings
 in Britain.

These contests seem at last to have produced a great cluster of regal chiefs within the island. We hear of kings of Devonshire; Cornwall; Kent; and Glastonbury; several kings of Cumbria, the kings of Deira and Bernicia, several contem-

¹⁵ Gildas, f. 19.

¹⁶ Procop. Hist. Vandal, l. i. sed mansit
 ab eo tempore sub τυραννοῖς.—2 Jerom ad Ctes. Britannia provincia fertilis tyranno-
 rum. 3 Gibb. 277. 1 Masc. 516.

porary kings of Wales, and others in the north and west of England, about the time of the Saxons.¹⁷ We find Malgocune styled by Gildas, the dethroner of many tyrants; and Nennius mentions the Saxons to have fought, and Arthur to have marched, with the kings of the Britons.¹⁸ But this succession of tyrants is only known to us by casual intimation, and by the denunciations of Gildas. They appear in their rest of obscurity like the distant wood at the last refractions of the departed sun: we behold only a dark mass of gloom, in which we can trace no shapes, and distinguish no individuals.

In this period of the independence of Britain, one tyrant is said to have predominated over the rest, whom Gildas calls the proud Gurthrigernus, and whom the Welsh triads name Gwrtheyrn. But this personage is so enveloped in fable, that if we admit his existence, we can believe little else about him than his name.¹⁹

¹⁷ See Gildas, Ep. p. 10. Nennius, p. 107. 117. Taliesin, passim. Caradoc Llanc. ap. Usher, 469. Llyward hen; Aneurin.

¹⁸ Gildas 12. Nennius. 114.

¹⁹ It has been already remarked, p. 76, that the Vortigern of Jeffry is only Gerontius.

Nennius has added idle fables to his name; yet gives him a genealogy. Mac Guortheneu, M^cGuitaul, M^cGuitolin, M^c ap Glou. p. 112. The Saxon Ethelwerd, p. 833. calls him Wrtheyrn, which corresponds with the name in the Welsh remains.

HISTORY OF THE
THE
HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

*The Arrival of Hengist.—His Transactions with the Britons.
—And his Settlement in Kent.*

THE period had now arrived, when England was to be occupied by a new race of people; and the events of the time were such, as to prepare the way for this great revolution.

Besides the many sovereignties, into which the island was then divided; a personal competition seems to have existed between this Gwrtheyrn, and a chieftain of Roman parentage, who is called Ambrosius, and in Welsh Emrys Wledig, or Emrys the chieftain. He is described as brave, modest, and

* The custom of gavel kind which prevailed among the Britons increased this evil. In the Lives of the Welsh Saints in the Cotto-

nian library, Vesp. A. 14, and Titus, D. 22. MSS. seemingly of the twelfth century, two striking instances of this custom are given.



Arrival of
Hengist.
A. C.
449.

sincere; and his parents had worn the imperial purple.²

During these struggles, the Scots and Picts were prosecuting renewed hostilities;³ and a mortal distemper was at the same time afflicting the island.⁴

In this state of the country, three Saxon cyules, or vessels, arrived from Germany on the British coast; whose leaders were named Hengist, and Horsa, descendants of Woden. As their numbers were too few for conquest, their visit must have been either a matter of accident, or for the purpose of a transient depredation. Nennius says, they were exiles.⁵

If we estimate the number of these Saxons, from the size of the Danish vessels in a subsequent age, they could not exceed three hundred men;⁶ and there is no reason to believe that the Saxon ships, as they are mentioned by Sidonius, were larger. They may have been some of the Saxons, who were at this time supporting the Armorici, and hovering on the coast of France.

They arrived at Ebbs-fleet,⁷ in the Isle of Thanet, near Richborough. They were retained to serve against the northern

The Vita Cadoci, after mentioning a king who left ten sons, says of them, "paternum regnum inter se secundum eorum numerum unicuique suam provinciam diviserunt." So the Vita S. Carentoci, speaking of the son of Cunedda, states that "divisit possessiones patris sui inter fratres suos."

² See Gildas, f. 25. Nennius, p. 108—110.

³ Gildas. The Vita S. Carentoci names the leaders of the Scotti, "In istis temporibus Scotti superaverant Britanniam; nomina ducum quorum Briseus, Thuibaius, Machleius, Anpacus." MSS. Vesp. A. 14, p. 90.

⁴ Gildas, f. 21. Marcellinus mentions a great pestilence following a famine at Constantinople, when Ætius III. and Symmachus were consuls, an. 446, p. 41. Scal. Euseb. Evagrius, l. 2. c. 6. extends it over Asia and the world, τῇ γῇ, p. 298. ed. Vales. Corporibus tumescentibus oculos amittebant:

simulque tussi vexati tertio die moriebantur. No remedy could be found for it.

⁵ Nennius, c. 28. Many authorities mention that the Saxons were invited, and many that they came accidentally. It is most likely that the first arrival was casual, but that their subsequent increase was the result of invitation.

⁶ Gildas, Bede, Flor. Wigorn. Malmsbury. H. Huntingd. and others, mention the ships, but not the number of men. Hume, p. 19. oct. ed. admits 1600.—Verstegan and his authority, p. 126. and Speed, Hist. 291. outrage probability so far as to crowd 9000 into these three ships.—The Danish ships had 100 men in each. Herv. Sag. p. 25. —Lazamon gives the probable number, "Three scipen gode comen mid than flode, threo hundred cnihten," MSS. Cott. Calig. A. 9. p. 79.

⁷ Or Ypwines fleet, Sax. Chronicle, 12.

invaders, the Pihtas; they were promised food and clothing; and were stationed in Thanet.⁸

As their force was small, it was natural that they should recommend the invitation of more of their countrymen, if they were to be used for the purpose of military defence.⁹ The king assented; and they sent to their native land for further supplies.¹⁰

But we must not resort to Wittichind for the speech of the ambassadors. Though a Saxon himself, he appears to have been completely ignorant of the Saxon antiquities.¹¹ We can conceive the application to have been an address to the courage and spirit of adventure of the Saxon youth. Hengist may have added, as a lure, the probability of greater aggrandizement;¹² but the lofty projects of ambition are not the offspring of a day: auspicious events gradually teach hope to be more aspiring. One unexpected success occasions a further elevation to be attempted, until a greatness, at one time the most improbable, is attained with a facility, which surprizes the adventurer. In the beginning of his career, Hengist could not have seen a kingdom, in the smiles of Gwrtheyrn. It was in the civil feuds and warring interests of

CHAP.

I.

449.

It was near the æstuary of the Wantsum, which divides Thanet from the main land of Kent.—The Wantsum was once navigable for ships of large burthen. See Batteley Ant. Rutup. 13. In Bede's time it was three stadia broad, and fordable only in two places, l. 1. c. 25. It is now, at Reculver, one of its entrances, a brook which may be stepped over, and in its centre, towards the Sarr road, is not six feet broad. Ebbs-fleet is now an inland spot at some distance from the sea.—Sarr was a naval station formerly.

⁸ Gildas, l. 13. Nennius, l. 28. 35.

⁹ Nennius, l. 37. I would place here that invitation which Bede, l. 1. c. 15; Ethelwerd, 833; Sax. Chron. 12; and others, affirm.

¹⁰ Sax. Chron. p. 12.

¹¹ He was the biographer of his contemporary, Otho, who died 972. Sigebert, 1196.

Germ. Quat. Celeb. Chron.—He addresses his Saxon history to Mathilda, Otho's maiden daughter. He knows nothing of the Saxons prior to their entering Thuringia. He was so ignorant of them as to say, that the Saxons in England were called Angli-Saxones, because the island was in a sort of angle of the sea. P. 3. he says, when he was a boy he heard of the Macedonian extraction of the Saxons.

¹² Ethelwerd, 833, asserts, that Hengist pointed out to the Saxons the fertility of the soil and the cowardliness of the natives. In his subsequent invitations he may have urged this theme, but we need not give him views of dominion the moment he landed; we must recollect that six years intervened between his first arrival and his struggles for the kingdom of Kent.

the unhappy island, that he first anticipated the future gratification of his ambition. Hence we need not fancy that his primary invitations held out magnificent hopes, or that his first friendly allies came in search of thrones. The sword of the Saxon was ready for every enterprize; war and booty were his high-prized pleasures; and it is probable, that at the first call of Hengist many thronged, who knew only that they were to fight and to be rewarded.

The subsequent actions of Hengist are known but imperfectly. He assisted in defeating the Picts and Scots. His countrymen flocked to join his arms. The Britons beheld their augmentation with discontent; but Hengist, possessed of Gwrtheyrn's confidence, obtained increased supplies for their subsistence; till the number of his forces encouraged him to assume a menacing port, and to maintain himself in the Isle of Thanet by force. To support his ambition, he made an alliance with the Picts and Scots.¹³

That his daughter Rowena, or Ronwen, secured to him the friendship of Gwrtheyrn; or that he destroyed three hundred of the British nobles, by treachery at a banquet; are incidents which can neither be authenticated, nor disproved.¹⁴ Other tales may be discredited with less hesitation.

His conflicts
with the
Britons.

455.

In the sixth year after his arrival, we find him engaged in battle against the natives. He is stated to have expelled Gworangon, the British king of Kent, and to have seized this province.¹⁵ This conflict is placed by the Saxon authors, at Ailesford in Kent.¹⁶ Gwrtheyrn headed the Britons. Horsa

¹³ Nennius, c. 35—37. Gildas, f. 23. Ethelwerd, 833. Wittichind; Bede, l. i. c. 15.

¹⁴ For these see Nennius, Jeffry, and Lazamon, and Golyddan's Poem in Welsh Archaiol. vi. p. 156. In the first edition of this work, I mentioned that I expected some valuable information from the ancient Welsh bards, on this part of our history. I have examined them; but I find them very barren of historical allusions. The triads indeed frequently mention Ronwen, the daughter of Hengist.

¹⁵ Nennius, p. 107, names Gnoirangon as king of Kent, when it was given to the Saxons. Lazamon says Garengon was an eorl the Kent ohte longe, and his fader biuoren him, MSS. p. 82. Henry of Silgrave in his Chronicon says, pulsato quodam subregulo Worongi nomine totam cantiam suscepit regnandum. MSS. Cott. Cleop. A. 12.

¹⁶ Sax. Chron. 13. Ethelwerd, 834. Florentius Wigorn. 198. See Gough's Camden, i. p. 231, on Horsa's monument.

fell; and Catigirn, the son of Gwrtheyrn: and, as the annalist remarks, that Hengist and his son Esca possessed Kent after this struggle, we may presume that the event was unfavourable to the natives.

CHAP.

I.

455.

The deposition or flight of Gwrtheyrn, who had introduced and protected the Saxons, followed this battle. His son Vortimer endeavoured to expel the invaders. We may concede to him all the praise that Cambrian affection can demand, and yet may decline to believe, that he had pulled up a tree by the roots, and with the vegetating club had killed Horsa and defeated the Saxons.¹⁷ Courage has been always the characteristic of the Cymry, and they may disclaim, without injury to their glory, every improbable achievement.

Crayford was the scene of another battle.¹⁸ The Saxon annalist claims the laurel, and declares that such was its decision, that the Britons abandoned Kent, and fled in terror to London.

457.

The gallant Vortimer is stated to have rallied the Britons; to have fought Hengist again at Stonar on the sea shore; to have driven him to his ships, and to have chased him from the island.¹⁹ The Saxon chroniclers do not avow this disaster: but as Gildas also asserts, that the invaders did at one period return home;²⁰ and as the next conflict acknowledged by the Saxons, occurred many years after at Wyppedes Fleot, near Stonar, on the edge of the sea, which resembles another disembarkation; and as there are some foreign traditions of his having founded Leyden,²¹ during his absence from England, the British account may be admitted.

Hengist
driven from
Britain.

465.

¹⁷ Nennius, c. 45.

¹⁸ Sax. Chron. xiii. Florent. Wigorn. 199. Ethelwerd, 834. Langhorn thinks, that the battle of the Darent, mentioned in Nennius, c. 46. was this. The Cray runs into the Darent. Chron. p. 17.

¹⁹ Nennius, c. 46 and 45. Batteley makes the place of conflict Stone-end, in the south corner of Kent. Antiq. Rut. 19. There is

a great quantity of human bones in the church at Hythe, which imply some great battle to have been fought in its vicinity.

²⁰ Gildas, f. 25. Tempore igitur interveniente aliquanto cum recessissent domum crudelissimi prædones.

²¹ This is announced to us by Joh. Gerbrandus, of Leyden, an author who died 1504. As I have not his work, I am unacquainted

Hengist
returns.

For five years the Saxons kept out of Britain.²² Vortimer at the end of that time died; and afterwards the invaders returned with greater power than before.²³ But we must now abandon Nennius, who fables about St. Germain, who had long before died,²⁴ and attach ourselves to the Saxon writers. The dreams of Jeffry are also to be overlooked; he has woven a series of incidents contrary to the tenor of the Saxon history, and to the most accredited traditions of Wales. He is therefore unworthy of belief on his single authority.

In this year Hengist and his son Esca fought the Britons at Wyppeds Fleot, on the sea coast of Thanet, very near the spot of his first landing. Twelve British chieftains fell, and a Saxon thegn; whose memory has been perpetuated in the appellation of the place.²⁵

The name of Hengist has been surrounded with terror, and all his steps with victory. From Kent, he is affirmed to have carried devastation into the remotest corners of the island; to have spared neither age, sex, nor condition; to have slaughtered the priests on the altars; to have butchered in heaps the people who fled to the mountains and deserts;²⁶ and to have finally established his dominion in Kent, Essex, Middlesex, and Sussex. But when from these hyperboles of conquest, we turn to the simple and authentic facts, that all the battles of Hengist, particularized by the Saxons, were fought in Kent; that one of the last contests was even in Thanet, in the extremity of his little kingdom;²⁷ and that no

with his authority for the fact; an extract from his Chronicon is in Usher, 420. Kempius, in his *Rer. Frisic.* l. 2. c. 1. affirms the same. Usher, *ib.* Besides these, Dousa, Meursius, Hegenitius, &c. *vulgata Hollandiæ Chronica sequuti*, report it. Usher, 420.

²² Nennius, c. 45. *Et per quinquennium postea insulam intrare non audebant usque ad obitum Guortemir.*

²³ *Ibid.* c. 46.

²⁴ St. Germain was bishop of Auxerre from 418 to 448. Fabricius *Biblioth. Med. Ævi*, l. 7. p. 139. He lived thirty years

and twenty-five days after St. Amator, says his biographer Constantius. Amator died 418. *Stillingfleet, Orig. Brit.* p. 209.

²⁵ *Sax. Chron.* p. 14. *Florent. Wig.* 200. *Ethelwerd*, 834.

²⁶ This statement is seriously given by Hume, p. 20, and by our venerable Milton. 1 *Kennett's Collection of Histor.* 37. *Langhorn*, p. 33, follows Jeffry, and adds York, Lincoln, London, and Winchester to his conquests.

²⁷ *Wippedfleet*. It is true, the Saxon Chronicle adds, that in 473, or eight years

good evidence is extant, of his having penetrated far beyond the region which he transmitted²⁸ to his posterity; and above all, that at this very period the Britons were so warlike that twelve thousand went to Gaul on the solicitations of the emperor, to assist the natives against the Visigoths;²⁹ we must perceive that exaggeration has been as busy with Hengist as with Arthur; and that modern historians have suffered their criticism to slumber, while they were perusing the confused declamations of Gildas and his copyist, Bede. What Gildas related as the general consequences of all the Saxon invasions, has been too hastily applied to the single instance of Hengist. The truth seems to be, that the fame of Hengist depends more on the circumstance of his having first conceived and executed the project of an hostile settlement in Britain, than on the magnitude of his conquests, or the extent of his devastations.

For twelve years after the battle at Wippeds Fleot, he remained alone exposed to the vengeance of the Britons. The ease, with which he seems to have maintained his extorted dominion, announces the continuance of the discord, which was wasting the British strength.³⁰ At length another adventurer appeared on the island. The success of Hengist made a new species of enterprize familiar to the Saxon

afterwards, Hengist and his son in a battle gained great plunder, and the Britons fled from them as though they were a fire; but the fact, that from the extremity of Thanet they fled into Middlesex, will fully meet this.

²⁸ Mr. Carte has observed, that he never extended his territories beyond Kent. Hist. England, p. 198. Mr. Whitaker is of a similar opinion. Manchest. ii. 4to. p. 28.

²⁹ The expedition of Riothamus, mentioned in Sidon. Apollon. l. 3. ep. 9. and Jornandes, c. 45. This incident was early noticed by Freculphus, Chron. t. 2. c. 17.—

Sigebert Gembl. in mentioning it gives a gentle lash on Jeffry; Quis autem fuerit iste, historia Britonum minime dicit, quæ regum suorum nomina et gesta per ordinem pandit. 1 Pist. 504. Either this Riothamus was Arthur, or it was from his expedition that Jeffry, or the Breton bards, took the idea of Arthur's battles in Gaul.

³⁰ An abrupt but valuable passage of Nennius, p. 118, intimates the civil fury at this period: "A regno Guorthrigerni usque ad discordiam Guitolini et Ambrosii anni sunt duodecim." Huntingd. 311. Non cessabant civilia bella. And see the Lives of the Welsh Saints, MSS. Vesp. A. 14.

states. To combine to obtain riches, cultivated lands, and slaves to tend them, was more inviting than to risk the tempest for uncertain plunder. Hence it is not wonderful, that while some were diffusing themselves over Germany, the achievement of Hengist was a beacon of emulation to the maritime part of the Saxon confederation; and assisted to convert it from naval piracy to views of regular conquest in Britain.

CHAP. II.

Ella arrives in Sussex.—Cerdic invades the South Part of the Island, and establishes the Kingdom of Wessex.—His Battles with the Britons, and with Arthur.—The authentic History of Arthur stated, and his Death.

ELLA was the next Saxon chieftain, or king, who invaded Britain. He landed with three sons in Sussex;¹ they drove the Britons into the great wood, which stretched from the south of Kent into Sussex and Hampshire;² and although they came with only three ships, they succeeded in gaining a settlement. By slow degrees they enlarged their conquests on the coast. In the eighth year of their arrival they attempted to penetrate into the interior; a dubious but wasteful battle checked their progress. Recruited by new arrivals from the continent, they ventured to besiege Andrede Ceaster, a city strongly fortified according to the usages of the age. The attack succeeded, but was disgraced by one of those barbarous actions which history ought never to mention without horror: the inhabitants were put to the sword.³

As this state was never formidable to the others, nor is much mentioned afterwards, there is no reason to imagine that Ella made any great progress; but Ella is commemorated as the preponderant Saxon chief⁴ at that time in England: his conquests were therefore superior to those of Hengist and his son, who were his contemporaries. This is another circumstance,

¹ Saxon Chron. 14. Flor. Wigorn. 203. Ethelwerd, 834.

² The weald of Kent was anciently 120 miles long towards the west, and 30 broad from north to south. On the edge of the wood, in Sussex, stood Andrede Ceaster.

Lambard's Perambulation of Kent, 167, 168. This vast wood was a wilderness, not inhabited by men, but by deer and hogs.

³ Sax. Chron. 15. "Ne wearth thær forthon an Bryt to lafe."

⁴ Sax. Chron. 71. Bede, l. 2. c. 5.

CHAP.
II.

477.

Arrival of
Ella.

490.

BOOK
II.

490.

which shews the mistake of attributing such extensive desolation and triumphs to Hengist. Both he and Ella, appear to have been satisfied with the possession of the provinces they invaded. It was the next warrior who spread consternation through Britain, resisted the genius of Ambrosius and Arthur, and by his successes ensured safety to the intruders in Kent and Sussex.

495.

Invasion of
Cerdic.

Eighteen years after Ella, another powerful colony of Saxons arrived in the island, under the auspices of Cerdic, who also derived his genealogy from Woden.⁵ The first essay was made with five ships; but the battles and conquests of its leaders, display either abilities of the most superior kind, or an accumulation of force far beyond that which had assailed the other parts of the island. The place of his primary descent is by no means clear. The modern name, which would correspond with the ancient appellation of Cerdices Ora, has not been preserved.⁶ Both Yarmouth and Southampton⁷ have had their advocates; but a remarkable passage in the Saxon Chronicle, which indicates that he attacked West Seaxnaland six years after his arrival,⁸ induces a belief that his first attempt was on some more distant part of the island.

501.

In the same year, that Cerdic assaulted the district afterwards denominated Wessex, a band of allies under Porta, effected a landing with the companies of two ships at Portsmouth, and defeated the Britons.⁹ From this year to his death,

⁵ Sax. Chron. 15. Flor. Wig. 205. Cerdic was the ninth descendant from Woden by his son Bældæg and his great grandson Freothogar. Allowing thirty years for a generation, this would place the existence of Odin about 225, which is near the time when the Franks accomplished their voyage from the Euxine.

⁶ Yet Higden, in his Polychronicon, makes Cerdicesore that quæ nunc dicitur Gerne-mouth, p. 224, which (if we could rely upon it) would decide that Yarmouth was the spot. Camden mentions a striking fact in favour of the claims of Yarmouth, "The place is called by the inhabitants at this day, Cerdicksand." Britan. 390. Gib.

⁷ This position is thought to be warranted by comparing the Saxon Chron. p. 18. which mentions the arrival of the nepotes of Cerdic at Cerdicesora, in 514. and Matt. West. who states their arrival in occidentali parte Britanniae, p. 184. but this is not conclusive evidence. Mr. Whitaker thinks, that all Cerdic's operations were confined to Hampshire, vol. ii. p. 61.

⁸ Sax. Chron. p. 15. So Ethelwerd, 634. Sexto etiam anno adventus eorum occidentalem circumierunt Britanniae partem quæ Westsexe nuncupatur.

⁹ Sax. Chron. p. 17. Flor. Wig. 205. Ethelw. 834.

Cerdic had to support incessant and very destructive hostilities with the Britons. Unlike the preceding adventurers, the positions of his battles embrace a very large extent. The Isle of Wight, Hampshire, and Buckinghamshire, witnessed the Saxon triumphs under him; as Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Oxfordshire experienced those of his son. The distance of their victories proclaim their spirit of enterprize and their strength. They established at last a kingdom, so powerful, as to absorb every other sovereignty.

CHAP.
II.

519.

Some of the battles mentioned by the ancient Welsh poets, are those between Cerdic and the Britons; one of these is the battle at Llongborth. In this conflict Arthur was the commander in chief;¹⁰ and Geraint ab Erbin was a prince of Devonshire, united with him, against the Saxons. Llywarch Hen, in his elegy on his friend, describes the progress of the battle: The shout of onset, and the fearful obscurity which followed the shock, are succeeded by the terrible incidents which alarm humanity into abhorrence of war. The edges of the blades in contact, the gushing of blood, the weapons of the heroes with gore fast dropping, men surrounded with terror, the crimson gash upon the chieftain's brow, biers with the dead and reddened men, a tumultuous running together, the combatants striving in blood to the knees, and ravens feasting on human prey," compose the dismal picture which this ancient bard has transmitted to us of a battle, in which he was personally engaged.

530.

Battle of
Llongborth.

The valiant Geraint was slain; "slaughtering his foes he fell."¹¹ The issue of the conflict is not precisely stated, but some ambiguous expressions concur with the absence of all triumphant language to indicate that the Britons did not prevail. As Llongborth literally implies the haven of ships,

¹⁰ Llywarch Hen's Elegies, p. 9.

¹¹ Ib. p. 3—7.

¹² Ib. p. 7. The 20th triad names him as one of the Llynghessawg, the naval commanders of Britain. The Welsh genealogies

make him the son of Constantine of Cornwall, from Gwen the daughter of Gyngar. They give him a son named Seliff. Bodedd y Saint, 33.

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530.

Battle on the
Llawen.

and was some harbour on the southern coast, we may consider this poem, as describing the conflict at Portsmouth, when Porta landed. The Saxon Chronicle says, that a very noble British youth fell on that occasion;¹³ but does not mention his name.

Llywarch mentions another battle of Arthur, on the Llawen. Gwen, the poet's favourite son, exerted himself in the struggle in which Arthur was engaged. The battle was at the Ford of Morlas. The bard describes his son, as watching the preceding night, with his shield on his shoulder. He compares his impetuosity to the assault of the Eagle; and laments him, as the bravest of his children. "As he was my son he did not retreat." Of the event of the battle, he only says, that Arthur did not recede.¹⁴

Of the other contests, which ensued before Wessex was colonized by Saxons, we have no further information from the British writers, except of the battle at Bath.

Battle of
Bath.

Gildas intimates, that until the battle of Bath the Saxons and the Britons alternately conquered; and that this was almost the last, but not the least slaughter of the invaders. Nennius makes it the twelfth of Arthur's battles.¹⁵ The position of this battle has been disputed,¹⁶ and its chronology¹⁷ is not decided. The Welsh MSS. in the red book of Hergest, says, that 128 years intervened from the age of Gwrtheyrn to the battle of Badon, in which Arthur and the elders conquered the Saxons.¹⁸

¹³ Sax. Chron. 17. Fl. Wig. 206.

¹⁴ Llywarch Hen's Elegy on Old Age, p. 131—135.

¹⁵ Gildas, f. 26. Nennius, f. 23.

¹⁶ Mr. Carte stations the Mount of Badon in Berkshire, p. 205. Usher places the battle at Bath, p. 477. Camden also thinks that Badon Hill is the Bannesdowne, or that which overhangs the little village Bathstone, and exhibits still its bulwarks and a rampire. Gibson, ed. p. 470.

¹⁷ Gildas in a passage of difficult construction says, as we interpret, that it took place forty-four years before he wrote,—

annum obsessionis Badonici montis, qui que quadragesimus quartus ut novi oritur annus, mense jam primo emenso qui jam et meæ nativitatis est, f. 26.—Bede construed it to mean the forty-fourth year after the Saxon invasion, l. 1. c. 16. but the words of Gildas do not support him. Matt. West. p. 186, places it in 520. Langhorn, p. 62, prefers 511.

¹⁸ See this published in the Cambrian Register, p. 313. Pryse, in his Defensio, p. 120. quotes a passage of Taliesin on this battle.

Arthur was the British chieftain, who so long resisted the progress of Cerdic. The unparalleled celebrity which the Briton has attained, in his own country and elsewhere, both in history and romance, must be allowed to exalt our estimation of the Saxon chief, who maintained his invasion, though an Arthur opposed him.

The authentic actions of Arthur, have been so disfigured by the additions of the Minstrels, and of Jeffry, that many writers have denied that he ever lived:¹⁹ but this is an extreme, as wild as the romances which occasioned it. The tales that all human perfection was collected in Arthur;²⁰ that giants and kings who never existed, and nations which he never saw, were subdued by him; that he went to Jerusalem for the sacred cross;²¹ or that he not only excelled the experienced past, but also the possible future,²² we may, if we please, recollect only to despise; but when all such fictions are removed, and those incidents only are retained, which the sober criticism of history sanctions with its approbation; a fame ample enough to interest the judicious, and to perpetuate his honourable memory, will still continue to bloom.

The probable
history of
Arthur.

The most authentic circumstances concerning Arthur, appear to be these:

He was a chieftain in some part of South Wales: and as a

His birth.

¹⁹ His existence was doubted very early. Genebrard said, it might be inferred from Bede, *Arcturum magnum nunquam extitisse*. Chron. l. 3. ap. Usher, 522.—Sigebert, who wrote in the twelfth century, complained that, except in the then newly published British history, *nullam de eo mentionem invenimus*. 1 Pistori Rer. German. 504.—Our Milton is also sceptical about him. See his work in 1 Kennett's History of England, p. 34.—Many others are as unfriendly to his fame.

²⁰ And, in short, God has not made, since Adam was, the man more perfect than Arthur. Brut G ab Arthur. 2 W. Archæol. p. 299.

²¹ Nennius, or his interpolator, Samuel, pledges himself that the fragments of the

cross brought by Arthur were kept in Wedale, six miles from Mailros. 3 Gale, p. 114.—Langhorn, Chron. p. 47. adduces Jerom and others to prove that Britons used to visit Jerusalem.

²² Joseph of Exeter, in his elegant *Antiocheis*, after contrasting the inferior achievements of Alexander, Cæsar, and Hercules, with those of his *flos regum Arthurus*, adds,

*Sed nec pinetum coryli, nec sidera solem
Æquant; annales Latios, Graios que
revolve;*

*Prisca parem nescit, æqualem postera
nullum*

*Exhibitura dies. Reges supereminet omnes
Solus; præteritis melior, majorque futuris.*

Ap. Usher, p. 515.

BOOK
II.
530.

Mouric, king of Glamorganshire, had a son named Arthur at this period;²³ and many of Arthur's actions are placed about that district, it has been thought probable, that the celebrated Arthur was the son of Mouric: but he is usually deemed the son of Uthur.

His actions.

He is represented in the Lives of the Welsh Saints, with incidents that suit the real manners of the age. Meeting a prince in Glamorganshire, who was flying from his enemies, Arthur was, at first, desirous of taking by force the wife of the fugitive. His military friends, Cei and Bedguir, persuaded him to refrain from the injustice; and to assist the prince to regain his lands.²⁴

A British chief having killed some of his warriors, Arthur pursues him with all the avidity of revenge. At the request of St. Cadoc, Arthur submits his complaint to the chiefs and clergy of Britain, who award Arthur a compensation.²⁵

At another time, Arthur is stated to have plundered St. Paternus, and to have destroyed a monastery in Wales.²⁶ These incidents suit the short character which Nennius gives of him, that he was cruel from his childhood.²⁷

It is stated, by Caradoc of Llancarvan, that Melva, the king of Somersetshire, carried off Arthur's wife, by force, to Glastonbury. Arthur, with his friends, whom he collected from Cornwall and Devonshire, assaulted the ravisher. The ecclesiastics interposed, and persuaded Melva to return her peaceably. Arthur received her, and both the kings rewarded the monks for their useful interference.²⁸

Arthur also maintained a war against the Britons, in the north of the island; and killed Huel their king. He was greatly rejoiced at this success; because, says Caradoc, he had killed his most powerful enemy.²⁹ Thus Arthur, by his wars with his own countrymen, as much assisted the progress

²³ Reg. Llandav.

²⁴ Vita S. Cadoci, Cott. MSS. Vesp. A.14.

²⁵ Ib.

²⁶ Ib. Vita S. Paterni MS.

²⁷ Nenn. c. 62.

²⁸ Carad. Vit. Gild. MSS. King's lib.

²⁹ Ib.

of the Saxons, as he afterwards endeavoured to check it, by his struggles with Cerdic.

CHAP.
II.

530.

He may have fought the twelve battles mentioned by Nennius;²⁰ but it is obvious, from the preceding paragraphs, that they were not all directed against the Anglo-Saxons. He is represented by Nennius, as fighting them in conjunction with the kings of the Britons. It is clear from many authorities, that there were several kings at this time in different parts of Britain.²¹ But there appears, from the Welsh remains, to have been a paramount sovereign; a Pen-dragon, or Pen-teyrn; who, in nominal dignity at least, was superior to every other. Arthur is exhibited in this character.²²

Four of the battles, ascribed to him by Nennius, have been ably illustrated by Mr. Whitaker.²³ Mr. Camden and others had remarked, that the Douglas, on which Nennius had placed them, was a river in Lancashire. The historian of Manchester has commented on the positions of these conflicts with great local knowledge. His fancy, though often too prolific, and even on this portion of our history brilliantly active, yet describes these with so much probability, that we may adopt his sketches as history.

The battle of Badon Mount has been celebrated, as his greatest and most useful achievement; a long interval of repose to the Britons has been announced as its consequence; yet it is curious to remark, that this extolled victory only checked the progress of Cerdic; and does not appear to have produced any further success. We hear not of the vindictive pursuit of Arthur, of the invasion of Hampshire, or the danger of Cerdic. The Saxon was penetrating onwards even towards Wales or Mercia; he was defeated, and did not advance. No other conflicts ensued. Arthur was content to repulse. This must have been because he wanted power to pursue. Arthur

²⁰ Nenn. c. 62. 63.

²¹ The Cott. MSS. Vesp. A. 14. in the Lives of the Welsh Saints, mention several in Wales.

²² Trioedd 7. p. 3.

²³ Hist. Manch. v. 2. p. 43—45.

How men-
tioned in the
Welsh bards.

was, therefore, not the warrior of irresistible strength; he permitted Cerdic to retain his settlements in Wessex; and such an acquiescence accredits the Chronicle, which asserts, that after many fierce conflicts, he conceded to the Saxon the counties of Southampton and Somerset.³⁴

This state of moderate greatness suits the character, in which the Welsh bards exhibit Arthur. They commemorate him; but it is not with that excelling glory, with which he has been surrounded by subsequent traditions. On the contrary, Urien of Reged seems to have employed the harp more than Arthur. Llywarch the aged, who lived through the whole period of slaughter, and had been one of the guests and counsellors of Arthur,³⁵ never displays him in transcendent majesty. In the battle of Llongborth, which Arthur directed, it was the valour of Geraint that arrested the bard's notice; and his elegy, though long, scarcely mentions the commander, whose merit, in the frenzy of later fables, clouds every other. As his poem was a gift to the dead, it may be supposed to possess less of flattery and more of truth in its panegyric. It speaks of Arthur with respect, but not with wonder. Arthur is simply mentioned as the commander and the conductor of the toil of war; but Geraint is profusely celebrated with dignified periphrasis.³⁶

In the same manner Arthur appears in the *Afallenau* of *Myrddin*; and in *Taliesin* he is mentioned as a character well known,³⁷ but not idolized; yet he was then dead, and all the actions of his patriotism and valour had been performed. Not a single epithet is added, from which we can discern him to have been that whirlwind of war, which swept away in its course all the skill and armies of Europe. That he was a

³⁴ Rad. quoted by Polychronica, says, in quibusdam chronicis legitur, quod tandem Arthurus extædiatus, post 26 annum adventus Cerdici fidelitate sibi jurata dedit ei Hampshire et Somersetam, p. 224.—The Chronicle of Ricardi Divisionensis, in MSS. at Cambridge, affirms the same. It is quoted by Langhorn, Chron. Rer. Anglorum, p. 70.

³⁵ Trioedd 116. p. 74.

³⁶ As "the glory of Britain—the terrifier of the foe—the molester of the enemy—the great son of Erbin—the strenuous warrior of Dyvnaint." Llywarch, p. 3—7.

³⁷ Myrddin styles him *modur tyrfa*, king of a multitude. *Afall.* 1 W. A. 153.

courageous warrior is unquestionable; but that he was the miraculous Mars of the British history, from whom kings and nations sunk in panic, is completely disproved by the temperate encomiums of his contemporary bards.

One fact is sufficient to refute all the hyperboles of Jeffry. Though Arthur lived and fought, yet the Anglo-Saxons were not driven from the island, but gradually advanced their conquests, with progressive dominion, whether he was alive or whether he was dead. Reflecting on this unquestionable fact, we may hesitate to believe that Arthur was victorious in all his battles,³⁸ because, if he wielded the whole force of Britain, and only fought to conquer, what rescued Cerdic, Ella, the son of Hengist, and the invaders of Essex and East-Anglia from absolute destruction?

The Welsh triads record many of Arthur's friends and warriors;³⁹ and mention one stanza of his composition, on three of his favourites: His poetry.

Sef ynt fy nhri chadfarchawg,
Mael hir, a Llyr Lluyddawg;
A cholofn Cymru Caradawg.⁴⁰

I have three heroes in battle;
Mael the tall, and Llyr with his army,
And Caradawg the pillar of Wales.

Arthur perished at last ingloriously, in a civil feud with Medrawd his nephew, who is said to have engrossed the affections of Gwenhyfar, his wife. But as the blow of Arthur on Medrawd is mentioned as one of the most mischievous His death.

³⁸ Nennius, c. 62. says this, "in omnibus bellis victor extitit." But Rad. quoted by Polychronicon, 224, says more probably of Cerdic, who often fought with Arthur, "si semel vinceretur, alia vice acrior surrexit ad pugnam."—Gildas, f. 26. implies an alter-

nation of victory previous to the battle of Bath.—The MSS. Chron. Divis. cited by Langhorn, 70. affirm it.

³⁹ See the triads 107—123. p. 73—75.

⁴⁰ Trioedd 29. p. 62.

blows in Britain ;⁴¹ this may have been the immediate cause of Medrawd's hostility.

The character of Medrawd has been sullied with every reproach by the Welsh, because Arthur, the shield of the Cymry, perished in the war which he excited. But there is a triad, which records his gentleness, good nature, and engaging conversation; and declares that it was difficult to deny him any request.⁴² He must have been powerfully supported, to have raised an army capable of confronting Arthur in the field. Maelgwn, who reigned in Gwynedd, seems to have been one of Medrawd's allies; for Gildas inculcates him for having destroyed the king his uncle, with his bravest soldiers.⁴³

The conflict took place at Camlan, where both Arthur and Medrawd fell:⁴⁴ Arthur, mortally wounded, was carried out of the field. From the coast of Cornwall he was conveyed into Somersetshire. Sailing along the shore they reached the Uzella, which they ascended, and the king was committed to the care of his friends in Glastonbury,⁴⁵ but their skill could not avert the fatal hour.

His death
concealed.

The death of Arthur was long concealed, and a wild tale was diffused among the populace, that he had withdrawn from the world into some magical region; from which at a future crisis he was to re-appear, and to lead the Cymry in triumph through the island. Why this fiction was invented, we may now enquire in vain. It could not repress the ambition of the Saxons, because the temporary absence of Arthur was sufficient to favour their wishes; and if his living authority could not prevent British insurrection, was it probable that his residence in another region would avail? Yet Taliesin industriously sang that Morgana promised, if he remained a long

⁴¹ Trioedd 51. p. 13.

⁴² Tr. 83. p. 18.

⁴³ Gildas, p. 12.

⁴⁴ This battle is placed in 542, by the Annals in Wharton's Anglia Sacra, v. 2. p. 648; by many authors cited by Usher,

Ant. p. 521, and by Jeffry and the Welsh Brut ab Arthur.

⁴⁵ See Jeffry's curious poem, MSS. Cott. Lib. Vesp. E. 4. See also Giraldus Spec. Eccles. dist. 2. c. 9. cited apud Usher, p. 523.

time with her, to heal his wounds; and it is notorious that the return of Arthur was a fond hope of the people for many ages. Perhaps it was an illusion devised to avert the popular vengeance from those who, by aiding Medrawd, had contributed to produce the lamented event;⁴⁶ or perhaps some, affecting to reign in trust for Arthur, conciliated the public prejudice in favour of their government, by thus representing that they governed only for him.

Of the family of Arthur we know little. We hear of Noe in Caermarthenshire, reputed to be his son; another son, Llechau, is celebrated as an accomplished warrior.⁴⁷ His sister Anna married Llew, brother of the famous Urien, and son of Cynvarch; the traitor Medrawd was her son.⁴⁸ The marriage of Anna united the kings of the northern Britons in consanguinity with Arthur.

But though the friends of Arthur concealed the place of his interment, a future age discovered it. In the year 1189, when romance had begun to magnify his fame, his body was diligently sought for in the abbey of Glastonbury. Henry de Soili, the abbot, at the solicitation of Henry the Second and others, prosecuted the search. The king had often told him, that he had heard from the Welsh bards, that Arthur lay buried between two pyramids very deep.⁴⁹ The monastery contained two stone pillars, with many inscriptions, illegible, from the injuries of time and the antiquity of the writing. The ground between these was dug to a great depth, and above seven feet below the surface a leaden cross was found under a stone, with the inscription, "Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arthurus in

His family.

His remains
discovered in
1189.

⁴⁶ Matth. Westm. p. 192. declares that the king voluntarily concealed himself while dying, that his enemies might not triumph, nor his friends be molested.

⁴⁷ MSS. Vesp. A. 14. p. 57. Trioedd 10. p. 3.

⁴⁸ See the genealogy in Mr. Owen's Life of Llywarch.

⁴⁹ The author of the Antiq. Glaston. Ecclesiæ, 3 Gale, p. 306, mentions that

Arthur and his queen lay in the cemetery of the monks, between two pyramids. The tallest of these was twenty-six feet high. The sculpture upon it could not be understood. One side exhibited a pontifical image; the second, royal pomp, and the letters Her, Sexi et Blisyer: he mentions the other sides. The other pyramid was eighteen feet high, with four sides.

BOOK
II.

542.

Origin of the
romances
concerning
Arthur.

"insula Avallonia." The abbot presented the cross, and Giraldus read the inscription. Nine feet below this the remains of Arthur appeared inclosed in oak. Of this formidable warrior nothing but dust and bones were visible. Some yellow female hair indicated that his second wife had lain near him.⁵⁰ The revered relics of the hero were re-interred with magnificence; and his sword, his caliburno, was presented as a precious gift, by Richard the First, to the King of Sicily.⁵¹

If the fame of Arthur had rested only upon his real achievements, it is probable that we should have known no more of him, than that a British chief of that name had existed, who opposed the Saxons. But it has happened, that the romancers of the early ages chose him, and his military companions, for their heroes; and made his court the seat and source of that chivalry, which afterwards became so prevalent. This has given a brilliancy to Arthur's reputation, which led Jeffry of Monmouth to publish his extravagant history; and which has given to the British king an undue proportion of literary celebrity. As this subject is much connected with the history of European literature, and has not been fully examined, it may be useful to trace the causes which have occasioned Arthur to obtain so much literary notice.

That the Gothic nations had poets, we learn from Tacitus⁵². But when we consider what has been delivered to us of the intellectual cultivation of the Druids; we cannot put the Gothic scalds into competition with the Keltic bards, who were one of the most distinguished branches of the Druidical order. We not only find them attending the kings, to sing their genealogies and praises,⁵³ and recording the actions of the illustrious;⁵⁴ but we are also informed, that the lessons of the Druids to their disciples, were conveyed in a great number of verses.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Giraldus, who was present, narrates this discovery; see him quoted in Langhorn, p. 91. See also the extract from the magna Glastoniensi tabula, ap. Usher, p. 117. Giraldus adds an exaggerated description of the size of his bones.

⁵¹ Usher, p. 121.

⁵² De mor. Germ.

⁵³ Appian in Celtic. Posidon. ap. Athen. l. 6. p. 246.

⁵⁴ Lucan, l. 1. Amm. Marcell. l. 15. c. 9. Festus Gloss.

⁵⁵ Caesar de bell. Gall. l. 6.

These must have been numerous indeed, as youth remained twenty years under their Druidical education;⁵⁶ and if we recollect that the Druids taught their youth, about the stars and their motion, the magnitude of the world, the nature of things, and the power and energy of the immortal gods;⁵⁶ we must feel that the Keltic bards were in all likelihood much superior to the rude Gothic scalds, in the degree of their mental cultivation.

The bards were not confined to Britain. They had also pervaded France; and more especially were in those parts which the Kelts continued to occupy. As the Romans spread their conquests over Gaul, the Keltic customs gave way to Roman civilization, and to Christianity. But there are in every country, invaded by a foreign enemy of dissimilar manners, some corners, to which the more stubborn of the ancient races retire with the prejudices and habits of their ancestors. Cornwall and Wales were the places in Britain in which the Druids sought refuge from the Romans, and the Britons from the Saxons; and Armorica, or Bretagne, seems to have been the part of France which became the last asylum of the ancient Kelts. That the Druids and the Pagan worship were respected in Armorica, in the fourth century, is evident from the poems of Ausonius; who mentions of his friend, as a flattering distinction, that he was a warden of the temple of Belenus, and descended from the Druids of Armorica.⁵⁷ The bards must therefore have flourished in this region, as a part of the Druidical system.

When the Britons fled from the Saxons, they transplanted themselves in numerous colonies to Armorica, in the fifth and sixth centuries. Ruval settled, with a large body, in the

⁵⁶ Cæsar de bell. Gall. l. 6.

Stirpe satus Druidum,
Gentis Aremoricae.

Prof. 10.

⁵⁷ Nec reticebo senem,
Nomine Phœbitium,
Qui Beleni ædituus
Nil opis inde tulit:
Sed tamen, ut placitum,

Also,
Tu, Bagocassis, stirpe Druidorum satus,
Si fama non fallit fidem,
Beleni sacratum ducis e templo genus;
Et inde vobis nomina. Prof. 4.

BOOK
II.
542.

north part of the province, from Leon to Dol.⁵⁸ Fracanus, the kinsman of Cato, probably Cai, the friend of Arthur, went thither with his family.⁵⁹ We also find Conomer, a British king, in the upper regions of Bretagne; and Weroc, another, ruling at Vannes.⁶⁰ Grallon governed in those parts which were called Cornwall.⁶¹ This was the district near Brest; of which Quimper was the metropolis.⁶² Caradoc Vreichvras, the personal friend and warlike companion of Arthur, and who had governed Cornwall in England under him, also established a kingdom in Bretagne.⁶³

These emigrations, of some of the most active characters in Britain, must have occasioned a great influx of bards accompanying their chiefs; because bards were a regular and established part of every chieftain's family; and their songs made a principal part of all their festivities.⁶⁴ Many of their clergy, who were the only other part of the people that attended to intellectual cultivation, went thither also.⁶⁵ Gildas, one of their most esteemed literary men of that day, emigrated with the rest.⁶⁶ The yellow plague, which raged at that time, increased the frequency and largeness of the emigrations.⁶⁷ The turbulent period which afterwards followed in Wales, must have made Bretagne, for a long time, a favourite retreat.

From the preceding facts, of the continuance of the Druids in Armorica, and consequently of their bards, and of the British emigrations, it is clear, that poetry must have flourished more in Bretagne, during the sixth and seventh centuries, than in Britain or any other part of the continent. The Franks

⁵⁸ Lobmeau Hist. Bretagne, p. 6, 7.

⁵⁹ Vita Winwal. an Armorican MS. ap. Boll. Act. Sanct. 1 Martii 256.

⁶⁰ Vita Gildæ ap. Bouquet, t. 3. p. 453.

⁶¹ Vit. Winw. 259.

⁶² Vit. S. David, MSS. of Utrecht ap. Boll. 1 Mart. 139. and see Bolland, 1 Feb. 602.

⁶³ Vita Paternus, MSS. Cott. Lib. Vesp. A. 14. and Brev. Venet. ap. Boll. 2 April, p. 381.

⁶⁴ Leges Howel Dha, p. 35, 36, 68, 69.

and 14—17. Taliesin is stated to have been in Armorica, in Jeffry's poem, MSS. Vesp. E. 4. p. 124.

⁶⁵ As S^t Teiliaw. Vit. ap. Boll. 1 Feb. 308. The emigrants in Bretagne sent for Sampson from Wales, and made him bishop of Dol. MSS. Vesp. A. 14. p. 47. S^t Paternus settled in Armorica, ib. MSS. p. 77—80.

⁶⁶ Vita Gild. ubi supra.

⁶⁷ Vit. S. Teil. Boll. 1 F. 308.

having occupied the best part of Gaul, and the Saxons having overspread England; the ruder Gothic manners of both nations diffused much national barbarism, in the countries which they occupied. As the Keltic and British bards were superior in cultivation to the Gothic scalds, so the bards of Bretagne must have been the most improved poets which then existed in those parts of Europe, from which the Gothic nations had recently expelled the Romans. Among the Gothic nations, the Christian clergy discountenanced their scalds, because the scalds were the advocates of their Pagan superstitions: but the British bards, having adopted Christianity, always maintained their rank and influence in Wales, and Bretagne; though they sometimes bickered with the monks.

From singing Pindaric odes to flatter the chiefs, the transition to chanting or reciting more circumstantial or narrative poetry, to please the people, was neither difficult nor improbable. Emigrations and new settlements, and the penury and distress which must have followed such violent changes of former habits, made the chiefs less able to reward their bards; and must have driven the bards to increase their means of support, by interesting the people as well as their lords.⁶⁸ If the metaphors of lyric poetry satisfied the chieftain, the details of the epic would alone be level to the comprehension of the vulgar. To compose in a slavish mixture of alliteration and rhyme, was more laborious than a prose recitation; and therefore the bards, who sought to interest the people, would gradually use the unlaboured tale, rather than the artificial verse.

That some of the bards of Wales actually submitted to the composition of tales, is evidenced by their Mabinogion, which

⁶⁸ One sentence of the prophecy ascribed by Jeffry to Merlin proves this to be the fact. It says of Arthur, "he shall be celebrated in the popular mouth, and his actions shall be *food* to those who narrate them."

Jeffry, 1. 7. c. 3. and Alanus, p. 22. Jeffry tells us in the first chapter of his work, that the actions of Arthur and other British kings were celebrated by many people, and were recited from memory.

still exist:⁶⁹ and that the bards of Bretagne indulged in this species of composition is clear, from Bretagne having been made the scene of so many of the old romances. That such tales existed, and were dear to all ranks of people, in the sixth century, seems intimated by a passage in Gildas, who chides the British clergy of that age, for being slow to hear the precepts of the saints, "but strenuous and intent to listen to idle things, and the *foolish fables* of secular men."⁷⁰ This must allude to the compositions of the bards; and of these, rather to their narrative tales, than to their elaborate poems. The strange poem of Taliesin, called the Spoils of Annwn, implies the existence of mythological tales about Arthur;⁷¹ and the frequent allusions of the old Welsh bards, to the persons and incidents which we find in the Mabinogion, are further proofs, that there must have been such stories in circulation amongst the Welsh.⁷²

But the most popular subject, which the bards of Bretagne could have chosen, was the brave resistance of the Britons to their hated enemies, the Saxons. The indignant exiles would be interested by this topic, more than by any other; as no patriotic chieftain could be mentioned by the bard with whom some of his hearers had not connection or kinship. But as Arthur was at that time the predominant sovereign of the Cymry; as he had fought their fiercest battles with frequent success; as his court had been an asylum to the expelled princes of the North,⁷³ and, from the power he attained, must

⁶⁹ The first four sections of the Mabinogion, which means literally Tales for Youth, are, the story of Pwyll prince of Dymed—The story of Bran the blessed—The story of Manawydan—The story of Math, the son of Mathonwy. All these tales are singular and original. But the most elaborate of all, is the tale of Peredur, which is indeed a regular romance of Arthur, but full of Welsh costume. It is a work of the middle ages; but has not so ancient an air as some of the others.

⁷⁰ Gildas, "ad præcepta sanctorum—osci-

antes ac stupidos et ad ludicra et ineptas secularium hominum *fabulas*—strenuos et intentos," p. 23.

⁷¹ It is translated in my Vindication of the ancient British Poems, p. 239. Some of the persons noticed in this, are the heroes of the two first sections in the Mabinogion.

⁷² I will not particularize these passages, as I hope to see them added by Mr. Owen to his intended translation of the Mabinogion.

⁷³ Several triads state this fact.

have been the most splendid court which the Britons visited; as he had combated in various parts of the mother country, and was therefore universally known; as he was a patron of bards, and a bard himself;⁷⁴ as his death furnished a striking catastrophe; and the uncertainty of his grave threw a romantic mystery over all his character; and as several of his personal friends emigrated to Bretagne: these reasons seem to make it natural, that the actions of Arthur should have been the favourite subject of the bardic genius. Indeed so greatly were the people of Bretagne interested in his fame, that Alanus de Insulis tells us, that even in his time (the twelfth century) they would not believe that their favourite was dead. "If you do not believe me, go into Bretagne, and mention in the streets or villages, that Arthur is really dead like other men: you will not escape with impunity; you will be either hooted with the curses of your hearers, or stoned to death."⁷⁵ Hence it appears very probable, that the bards of Bretagne were the first inventors and composers of the romances concerning Arthur. Being more removed from the scenes of his actions, they indulged themselves in greater licence in exaggerating them; and indeed, how could they exaggerate too much for hearers, who could not be convinced that he was dead, though seven centuries had revolved since his disappearance? When Jeffry of Monmouth went into Bretagne, he found these fabulous narrations afloat. He embodied them⁷⁶ into a regular narration, or he translated some collection of them, and gave

⁷⁴ See before, p. 105.

⁷⁵ Alanus de Insulis, p. 17. He was born 1109. From this foolish chimera, *Arturem expectare* became a proverb, to denote excessive credulity.

*Quibus si credideris
Expectare poteris
Arturem cum Britonibus.*

Pet. Bless. Ep. 57.

⁷⁶ I mentioned, in my Vindication of the ancient Welsh Bards, that I believed Jeffry's work to be his own composition, p. 145;

but that I also accredited his assertion, that he found Arthur's history in a book he brought from Bretagne. Mr. Ellis, with whom I should never differ but with regret, thinks this a contradiction (*Early English Rom.* p. 85.) Let me then explain my meaning more fully. I think Jeffry found in Bretagne a book or books, containing the tales which he has given us *about Arthur*. But I also believe that the rest of his work is his own composition, though he may have used Breton stories occasionally. His whole

them to the world as history. Till then, the Breton language had greatly concealed them from the rest of the world. But his Latin work, decorated with the solemn name of History, gave them credit and dignity, and diffused them through Europe.

The Breton tales came into fashion, and Arthur became the popular hero;⁷⁷ because his countrymen and their descendants were the first romance composers. It is indeed probable, that the Breton tales had become known in England and Normandy, before Jeffry published. In Athelstan's time, many Breton nobles and their followers fled from the Norman sword, and sought an asylum in the court of Athelstan; who received them kindly:⁷⁸ and between his reign and the Norman conquest, the vicinity of Normandy and Bretagne, and their frequent intercourse of war and friendship, must have communicated to the Normans some of the popular tales of the Breton nation.⁷⁹ The fact, that almost all the heroes of the romances about Arthur, may be found in the Welsh triads, or poetry, strengthens the argument, that these romances originated in Bretagne; and that the Welsh and Armorican bards were their first inventors.⁸⁰ The romances concerning Charlemagne, may have had the same origin. The Roland,

history consists of *twelve* books, of which *two* only are devoted to Arthur, with the beginning of another; and in this he admits (l. 11. c. 1.) that he *added* to what he found in his British book, what his friend Walter had communicated to him of Arthur's wars on his return to England.

⁷⁷ We cannot wonder that so many romances were composed about Arthur, when we observe what Alanus de Insulis says of his celebrity in the twelfth century. "Who does not speak of him? He is even more known in Asia, than in Britain, as our pilgrims returning from the East assure us. Egypt and the Bosphorus are not silent; Rome, the mistress of cities, sings his actions. Antioch, Armenia, Palestine, celebrate his deeds. Thus was Merlin's prophecy fulfilled." He adds the passage already cited. p. 22.

⁷⁸ Athelstan not only received Mathuedoi, the sovereign of Bretagne, whom the Normans had dethroned, but became the sponsor of his son, and educated and nourished him to manhood, and assisted him to regain the throne of his ancestors. Chron. Namnet. Restit. ap. Bouq. p. 276.

⁷⁹ Mr. Ellis says, truly, "The Norman poets themselves frequently profess to have derived their stories from a Breton original. Early English Metrical Romances, p. 34.

⁸⁰ I mentioned this theory in the first edition of the first volume of this work, published in 1799, p. 383 and 389. The opinion has been since adopted by Mr. Leyden, in the Introduction to his Complaint of Scotland, and favoured by Mr. Ellis in his ingenious and interesting Introduction to his Early English Metrical Romances, p. 33.

so famous in romance, was the military chieftain, whom Charlemagne appointed to be the Comte des Marches de Bretagne.⁸¹ Hence the Bretons had a personal connection with him, which may have given them an interest in his fame—an interest highly increased, when it became known that he had fallen against the Saracens, at the battle of Ronceval.⁸²

⁸¹ Lobm. t. 1. p. 27.

⁸² The opinion above expressed, that in the sixth and seventh centuries, there were bards in Armorica and Wales, who descended from their bardic character, to gain popularity and subsistence by telling stories and amusing the people, seems to be confirmed by a satire of Taliesin; which expresses the most decided hostility to such wandering bards, or minstrels.

It may amuse the curious to translate the poem :

“ Gall from the Bards.”

The minstrels (cler) exercise themselves in false customs
 Their praise is not in the regular melody ;
 They sing the fame of insipid heroes ;
 They are always diffusing falsehoods ;
 The commandments, the statutes of God, they break ;
 Married women by their praise,
 With irrational thoughts, they greatly deceive ;
 The beautiful virgins they corrupt,
 May they beware how they trust such,
 And rank them with men of truth !
 Age and time they consume in vain :
 In the night they carouse, in the day they sleep ;
 Idle, they get food without labour ;
 They hate the churches, but seek the liquor houses ;
 The false thieves consent together ;
 For courts and feasts they enquire ;
 Every indiscreet discourse they detail ;
 Every deadly sin they praise ;
 They wander over all the villages, towns, and lands ;
 They discourse on every filthy trifle ;
 They despise the commandments of the Trinity ;
 They respect neither Sundays nor holidays ;
 They care not for the days of necessity ; (death)
 From every gluttony they refrain not ;
 Excess of eating and drinking is what they desire ;
 Tenths and family offerings they pay not ;
 The men appointed, they mock !

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Birds fly; bees collect honey;
 Fishes swim; reptiles creep;
 Every thing labours for its subsistence,
 Except minstrels, vagrants, and worthless thieves.
 Blaspheme not among you teaching, nor the art of song!
 For God gives anguish and melancholy
 To those whose habit is false purposes,
 In mocking the service of Jesus.
 Be silent, ye Pos-bards! unprosperous false ones!
 Ye know not to judge between truth and falsehood;
 If ye be primary bards of faith,
 Of the work of God the artist,
 Foretell to your King his misfortunes!
 I am a diviner and universal chief of the bards;
 I know every pillar in the caves of the West;
 I released Elphin from the stone round tower.
 Tell your King what will be his security,
 If the Lord of the sea coast of Rhianedd come,
 To avenge iniquity on Maelgwn of Gwynedd:
 On his hair, on his teeth, his eyes; his yellow countenance!
 Thus will he work his revenge on Maelgwyn of Gwynedd!

TALIESIN, p. 26.

This severe invective against the ambulatory bards, who sought their subsistence by amusing the people, proves the existence of such a set of men at that time. These bards, whom Taliesin tauntingly calls Pos-bards, who disregarded the regular canons of bardic melody; and whom he distinguishes so carefully from the Prif bards, of whom he was one; were probably the authors of the Mabenogion, and of the romantic tales about Arthur and his friends. This Poem of Taliesin and its subject, are alluded to by Phylip Brydydd, who lived about 1200. See his Poems, 1 W. A. p. 377, 378. As I cannot ascertain the exact meaning of the contemptuous term *Pos-bard*, I have placed the original expression in the text. Brydydd applies Go-veird, or "less than bards," to a similar class of persons.

CHAP. III.

The Arrival of Ida in Northumberland.—Battles between the Saxons and the Britons in the North Part of the Island.—The Saxon Kingdoms of Deira, Bernicia, Mercia, East-Anglia; and Essex established.

ABOUT fifty-two years after the expedition of Cerdic, and almost a century after the landing of Hengist on the island, another fleet of warriors directed their course to the North. They who had hitherto arrived were Jutes and Saxons, but the associates of Ida were Angles; and as he came with a train of forty vessels,¹ it was by far the most formidable emigration.

That part of Britain, between the Humber and the Clyde, was occupied by Britons; but they were divided into many states. The part nearest the Humber, was called Deifyr by the ancient natives, which, after the Saxon conquest, was named Deira; and north of Deifyr was Bryneich, which became latinized into Bernicia. Deifyr and Bryneich had three sovereigns, whose names have descended to us: Gall, Dyvedel, and Ysgwnell.

In some part of the district, between the Humber and the Clyde, was a state called Reged, which Urien, the patron of Taliesin, governed. In the parts nearest the Clyde, there were three other sovereigns, Rhydderc the Generous, Gwallog the son of Lleenog, and Morgant. Llywarch Hen also enjoyed a little principality in Argoed. Aneurin, the bard, was the chief of a district, called Gododin. And Mynnydawr ruled in a part near the friths at Eidyn, which has been conjectured

CHAP.
III.

547.

Ida's arrival.

State of the
North.

¹ Sax. Chron. Flor. Wig. 218.

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to be the origin of Edinburgh, or the burgh of Edin. Cunedda was also a wledig, or sovereign, in some of these northern regions, who emigrated into North Wales; and Cau was another. All these, and some others, are mentioned in the Welsh remains; which prove that the north of Britain, like the south, was divided amongst many sovereignties: some of them of very inconsiderable size. This state of the country, at the time of the Anglo-Saxon invasion, must be always recollected, when the facility and permanency of the Saxon conquest are adverted to.² From the Cymry, or Britons, having retained possession of much of this country, for some time after the Saxon invasions, a large portion of it was called Cumbria; which is the Latin name by which their states or kingdoms in these parts have been usually expressed. As the Saxon conquests spread, the extent of British Cumbria was diminished, and the most noted of the British race, who had any Cumbrian kingdom in these parts, were the Ystrad-clwyd, who maintained what has been called the Strat Clyde kingdom. The word, Y-strad-clyd, literally imports the valley of the Clyde; and the region they occupied, was therefore about the Clyde. After enduring wars, with various fortune, with the Britons, the Dalriads, and the Piks, their little kingdom was destroyed in the close of the tenth century. Alclyde, which means the height of the Clyde, was the principal town of the Y-strad-clyde; and was in all likelihood the present Dunbarton. This circumstance increases the probability, that the Eiddyn, another town in these parts, which Mynyddawg governed at this period, was the town on the Forth, almost parallel with Alclyde, and long become illustrious, under the name of Edinburgh. Another British state between the Ystradclyde, and the Saxons, seems to have existed so late as

² See for these facts Nennius—Caradoc's Life of Gildas—The Welsh Triads—Aneurin's Gododin—Taliesin's Poems—Cotton.

MSS. Vesp. A. 14—Llywarch Hen's Poems—Bodedd y Saint. 2. W. Arch.

the tenth century ; as Eugenius, or Owen, king of the Cumbri, is then mentioned.³

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The defence of the Britons appears to have been vigorous in these districts ; and their warriors have received a liberal meed of praise, from the bards whom they patronized.

Of these, Urien, the chief of Reged, has been most extolled. He was the son of Cynvarç, the aged.⁴ Taliesin has addressed to him several poems, of high panegyric ; and alludes to him in others. In these he calls him the head of the people ; the shield of warriors ; the most generous of men ; bounteous as the sea ; the thunderbolt of the Cymry. He compares his onset to the rushing of the waves ; and to the fiery meteors moving across the heavens.⁵ But though he notices him as engaged in many battles,⁶ he has only distinctly described the battle of Argoed Llwyfain, and the battle of Gwenystrad.

Urien of
Reged.

As Ida was the war-king, who led the Angles against the Britons in these parts, it was with his forces, that Urien and his sons and friends, so fiercely combated. He is not named in the Welsh poetry ; because they have chosen to stigmatize the cruel invader, by a reproachful epithet. They call him Flamddwyn,⁷ the flame-bearer, or destroyer ; a term which implies the devastations that accompanied his progress. As the elegy of Llywarch Hen, on Urien, expresses that he conquered in the land of Bryneich, or Bernicia ;⁸ we must infer, that he was frequently successful against Ida ; and two of his most fortunate battles appear to be those which Taliesin has selected for his praise.

³ Mr. Pinkerton distinguishes the kingdom of Strathclyde from the kingdom of Cumbria. Inq. Hist. Scot. 1. p. 60—99. But we must add to this opinion, the recollection that there were many British states at the time of Ida's invasion.

⁴ Several triads mention him and his family, as also Llywarch Hen, and Taliesin.

⁵ See the Yspeil Taliesin, p. 57. Canu Urien Reged, p. 55 ; and his other poems addressed to Urien.

⁶ As in his Canu i Urien, p. 57.

⁷ Flamddwyn is also mentioned in the triads ; but it is for a misfortune which some ladies will not permit either the brave or the good to escape. His wife, Bun, is classed among the British women who were notorious for unchastity. Trioedd, 56. p.

⁸ Llywarch Hen, p. 27.

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547.

Battle of
Argoed
Llyvain.

The bard states, that on a Saturday, the invaders under "the destroyer," hastened with four divisions, to surround Goddeu and Reged, the seat of Urien's government. They spread from Argoed to Arfynnydd, and demanded submission and hostages.

Owen, the son of Urien, and his friend Cenau, indignantly rejected the pacific proposal. Urien then indulged their ardour. He exclaimed,

Being assembled for our country,
Let us elevate our banners above the mountains;
And push forward our forces over the borders;
And lift our spears above the warriors' heads;
And rush upon the Destroyer in his army;
And slay both him and his followers!

Impressed with his patron's valour, Taliesin declares, that when he was declining with age, he should be unable to meet death with smiles, unless he was praising Urien.*

Battle of
Gwenystrad.

Another conflict with Ida, was at the mound of Gwenystrad, literally "the pleasant valley." The Britons of Cattrath assembled round Urien, "the king of victorious battle." Taliesin, who was present in the struggle, thus describes it:

Neither the fields, nor the woods, gave safety to the foe,
When the shout of the Britons came
Like a wave raging against the shore—
I saw the brave warriors in array;
And after the morning, how mangled!
I saw the tumult of the perishing hosts;
The blood springing forward and moistening the ground.
Gwenystrad was defended by a rampart:
Wearied, on the earth, no longer verdant,
I saw, at the pass of the ford,
The blood-stained men dropping their arms;
Pale with terror!—
I admired the brave chief of Reged;

* Taliesin, p. 53.

I saw his reddened brow,
When he rushed on his enemies at Llec gwen Calystan:
Like the bird of rage was his sword on their bucklers;
It was wielded with deadly fate.

Taliesin renews his wish, not to die pleasantly, unless he was praising Urien.¹⁰

Besides the patriotic valour of Urien, which he lavishly praises with all the artifice, and sometimes with the exaggerations of poetry;¹¹ Taliesin extols highly his liberality. This is the theme of several poems.¹²

Urien was also commemorated by his bardic friend, Ilywarch Hen, who has left an elegy upon him. After bravely resisting the Saxons, the common enemy of the Cymry, and even conquering Bernicia; it was the misfortune of Urien to be involved in one of those civil contests which were the disgrace and ruin of the Britons. As he was besieging one of the descendants and successors of Ida, in Holy Island, he was slain by Llovan Lawdeffro, or Llovan with the detested hand, an emissary of Morgant, one of the chiefs of the

Urien killed.

¹⁰ Taliesin, p. 52.

¹¹ One specimen may be added.

What noise is that? Does the earth shake?
Or is it the swelling sea that roars?
If there be a sigh in the dingle;
Is it not Urien who thrusts?
If there be a sigh on the mountains;
Is it not Urien who conquers?
If there be a sigh on the slope of the hills;
Is it not Urien who wounds?
If there be a sigh of dismay;
Is it not from the assault of Urien?
There is no refuge from him;
Nor will there be from famine,
To those who seek plunder near him!
His wrath is death!

CAN. URIEN, p. 56.

¹² See the Dadolwch Urien, which is translated in the Vindication of the ancient British Poems, p. 244. See also the Songs to Urien in 1 Welsh Arch. p. 55.

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II.
547.

His son
Owen.

Northern Britons.¹³ Llywarch's elegy celebrates the British king with much earnest sympathy, but in rude and warlike strains.¹⁴

Owen, one of the sons of Urien, was also distinguished for his brave resistance to the Angles under Ida. Taliesin praises his liberality and valour; and says he chased his enemy, as a herd of wolves pursuing sheep.¹⁵ In his Song to the Winds, the bard records Owen's successful defence of the flocks and cattle of his province; and also mentions his battles at the ford of Alclud, and other places. The poet's imagery is wild and dismal, like his subject. He describes the swords whirled round the faces of the combatants, and the blood staining their temples. "There was joy, he exclaims, that day to the ravens, when men clamoured, with the frowning countenance of battle. But the shield of Owen never receded."¹⁶ By the sword of this warrior, Flamddwyn, or Ida, perished.¹⁷ Taliesin occasionally commemorates other British heroes; but as it would be useless to revive a catalogue of names, long since forgotten, they need not be enumerated here.

Battle of
Catteraeth.

Another great battle between the Saxons, and the Northern Britons, was at Catteraeth. This is the subject of the celebrated Gododin of Aneurin.¹⁸

It appears from this poem, that the Britons consisted of many chiefs, with their forces, from Deira and Bernicia; from the Novantes, Eiddyn, and other places; who had confederated together, to oppose the Saxons. The supreme British chief, seems to have been Mynyddawg of Eidyn; but many other warriors are extolled by the poet. Their host was a collection of the British strength in those parts; and three hundred and sixty-three of the Britons are stated to have been

¹³ Nenn. Gen. p. 117. Trioedd. 38. p. 9.

¹⁴ See it translated in Owen's Llywarch Hen, p. 23.

¹⁵ Marwnad Owain ap Urien Reged, Tal. 1 W. A. p. 59.

¹⁶ Can y Gwynt, p. 38, 39.

¹⁷ Marwnad Owain, p. 59.

¹⁸ Taliesin also frequently alludes to the battle and to the chiefs who fought in it, as in the Dyhuddiant Elphin, p. 21. the Guorchan Maelderw, p. 84. and the Gorchan Cynvelyn, p. 60.

distinguished by wearing the golden torques,¹⁹ which was a mark either of wealth or rank. Aneurin, who was himself the son of a petty ruler in the North, was engaged in the battle. The Britons unfortunately had indulged too liberally in a previous carousal. The poem abounds with lamentations on this disastrous circumstance. The result was the total defeat of the Britons; and the destruction of all their leaders but three, of whom the commemorating bard was one.²⁰

CHAP.

III.

547.

The progress of the Angles, in the North, was slow. Elmet, which is in Yorkshire, was not conquered from the Britons, till Edwin's reign, who expelled Certec the British king.²¹ Ida's conquests established the Angles in Bernicia, which his sons maintained.²² Ella, one of his companions, turned his arms principally on Deifyr or Deira; and raised a new kingdom of Angles there.²³ These two kingdoms were often united by conquest.

560.

The exact chronology of the occupation of Mercia, East Anglia, and Essex, by the Anglo-Saxons, is by no means indisputable. At some period near 500, the East Anglian state was colonized, though the monarchy did not appear till after 530.²⁴ Essex claims a date as a kingdom about

Occupation of
East Anglia.

Essex.

¹⁹ "In 1692 an ancient golden torques was dug up near the castle of Harlech, in Merionethshire. It is a wreathed bar of gold, or perhaps three or four rods jointly twisted, about four feet long, flexible, but naturally bending only one way in form of a hatband; it is hooked at both ends; it is of a round form, about an inch in circumference, and weighs eight ounces." Gibson's Additions to Camden, p. 658. ed. 1695.—Bonduca wore one, Xiphelin. Epit. Dionis. p. 169. ed. H. S. 1591; and the Gauls used them, Livy, l. 36. c. 40. Gibson quotes a passage of Virgil, *Æneid*, l. 5. v. 559. which implies that the Trojan youth wore them.—Llywarch, p. 135. says, that his twenty-four sons were eudorchawg, or wearers of the golden torques, which, from the above description, we perceive was not a chain.

²⁰ The Gododin of Aneurin is worth translating, as a curious specimen of the manners of the period, and as an important contemporary record of one of the great

battles between the Britons and their invaders. It occupies the first fourteen pages of the Welsh Archaeology. See Vindic. p. 212—220.

²¹ Geneal. Nenn. 117.

²² Flor. Wig. 218.

²³ Ibid. 221. Both Ida and Ella were descended from Woden, ib.

²⁴ Matth. Westm. 188. and H. Hunt. 313. agree in stating that the Angles who landed here were under separate chiefs. M. West. dates their arrival in 527. Alured. Beverlacensis, 82. and Malmesbury, 34. place the colonization of East Anglia before the establishment of the kingdom of Wessex, which was founded in 519. Sax. Chron. 18. A monarchy was at last formed under Uffa, who died in 578, according to Matth. Westm. 197.—The genealogy attached to Nennius states that Guecca, the father of Uffa, was the first sovereign of East Anglia, p. 116.

BOOK
II.

Mercia.

530.²⁵ Mercia can, from reasonable evidence, lay claim to the year 586.²⁶ A line of the genealogy appended to Nennius, seems to intimate, that Mercia was a ramification of Deira.²⁷

When we contemplate the slow progression of the Saxon conquests, and the insulated settlements of the first adventurers, which were like fairy rings upon a spacious heath, we can hardly repress our surprize, that any invader should have effected a permanent residence. Hengist was engaged in hostility for almost all his life; the safety of Ella in Sussex was little less precarious. The forces of either were so incommensurable with the numbers and bravery of the people they attacked, that nothing seems to have saved them from immediate expulsion or annihilation, but the civil dissensions of the natives. Fallen into a number of petty states,²⁸ in actual warfare with each other, or separated by jealousy, Britain met the successive invaders with a local, not with a national force. The selfish policy of its chiefs, who triumphed in the misfortunes of each other, was auspicious to the Saxon aggression.

Frisians in
England.

The people, who invaded Britain, were principally Saxons, Angles, and Jutes: but as the Saxon confederation extended to the Rhine, if not to the Scheld, we can easily accredit the intimations, which we occasionally meet with, that Frisians,²⁹ and their neighbours were mixed with the Saxons. The Britons maintained a long, though disorderly struggle, and many fleets of victims must have been sacrificed, by

²⁵ Erkenwin was the first king; he died 587, says M. West. 200, who places the commencement of his reign in 527. This reign seems too extravagantly long; yet we must not forget that Ethelbert reigned fifty-six years. Sax. Chron. 25. It is agreed, that the occupation of Essex was synchronous with that of East Anglia.

²⁶ Crida was the first Mercian sovereign, and grandfather to Penda; he began to reign, 586. 3 Gale Scriptores, 229. H. Hunt. 315. 2 Leland's Collectanea, 56. 1 ib. 258.—Leland, ib. 1. 211. from an old

chronicle, observes that the Trent divided Mercia into two kingdoms, the north and south.

²⁷ Penda primus separavit regnum Merciorum a regno Nordorum. Nennius, p. 117.

²⁸ Tota insula, diversis regibus divisa, subjacuit. Joannes Tinmuth. ap. Usher, 662.

²⁹ Bede, l. 5. c. 10. Procop. l. 4. p. 467. Colinus, ap. Canneg. de Britten, p. 68. and Ubb. Emm. p. 41. and Spener 361.

their patriotic vengeance, before the several kingdoms were established. In such a succession of conflicts, the invading chiefs would gladly enlist every band of rovers, who offered; and, as in a future day, every coast of Scandinavia and the Baltic, poured their warriors on England, so it is likely that, in the present period, adventurers crowded from every neighbouring district.³⁰

In this part of our subject we are walking over the country of the departed, whose memory has not been perpetuated by the commemorating heralds of their day. A barbarous age is unfriendly to human fame. When the clods of his hillock are scattered, or his funereal stones are thrown down, the glory of a savage perishes for ever; nor can fancy be admitted to supply the loss.

Opposite to the island of Northstrand, on the western shore of Sleswick, a small tract of land, dangerous from its vicinity to a turbulent sea, was in ancient times occupied by a colony of Frisians. They extended north from Husum for several miles along the sea-coast. In the middle of the district was the town Brested, surrounded by a rich soil, though sands extended beyond. It terminated about Langhorn. The people who dwelt on it were called Strandfrisii, and the tract was denominated Frisia Minor. The marshy soil was colonized by the natives of Friesland, in an age which has not been explored. Saxo speaks of Canute the fifth's journey to it, and then describes it as rich in corn and cattle, and protected from the ocean by artificial mounds. It was a complete flat; the waters sometimes were terrible to it; fields were often burst, and carried off to another spot, leaving to their owner a watery lake. Fertility followed the inundation. The people were fierce, active, disdaining heavy armour, and expert with their missile weapons.³¹

³⁰ Mascou, 527. Some of the Icelandic writings mention northern kings who had dominions in Britain in the sixth and seventh centuries. If they be not entirely

fabulous, they may relate to some of these expeditions.

³¹ Pontanus, Chorograph. 657. Saxo Grammaticus, l. 14. p. 260. Ed. Steph. and

It is an opinion of Usher,³² that from these Frisians, and not from the natives of Friesland, Hengist may be deduced. This supposition is not hostile to the information of Bede, that the companions of Hengist were Jutes, because Frisia Minor is part of South Jutland. But the authorities before referred to, make it probable that the natives of Friesland accompanied the Saxons.

The various parts of Britain, into which the Saxons and their confederates spread themselves, may be stated from the Irish primate.³³

The Jutes possessed Kent, the Isle of Wight, and that part of the coast of Hampshire which fronts it.

The Saxons were distinguished, from their situation, into

South Saxons, who peopled Sussex.

East Saxons, who were in Essex, Middlesex, and the south part of Hertfordshire.

West Saxons, in Surrey, Hampshire (the coast of the Jutes excepted), Berks, Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and that part of Cornwall which the Britons were unable to retain.

The Angles were divided into

East Angles, in Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, and (it should seem) part of Bedfordshire.

Middle Angles, in Leicestershire, which appertained to Mercia.

his Prefatio, p. 3. Frisia Major was not unlike it, as a low marshy soil, much exposed to the fury of the ocean. Saxo, l. 8. p. 167. and Steph. notes, 16.

³² Usher, Primord. 397.

³³ Usher, Primord. c. 12. p. 394. With this, Camden's idea may be compared; and for the sentiments of an ingenious modern on the Anglo-Saxon geography, see Hist. Manchester, l. 2. c. 4. p. 88.

The Mercians, divided by the Trent into

South Mercians, in the counties of Lincoln, Northampton, Rutland, Huntingdon, the north parts of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, Bucks, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire.

North Mercians, in the counties of Chester, Derby, and Nottingham.

The Northumbrians, who were,

The Deiri, in Lancaster, York, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Durham.

The Bernicians, in Northumberland, and the south of Scotland, between the Tweed and the Firth of Forth.

CHAP.
III.

560.

CHAP. IV.

The History of the Anglo-Saxon Octarchy, to the Victory of Oswald over Cadwallon, A.D. 634.

BOOK
II.

An Octarchy
established.

THE exertions of the British to repel their invaders, having failed, eight Anglo-Saxon governments were established in the island. This state of Britain has been denominated, with great impropriety, the Saxon heptarchy.¹ When all the kingdoms were settled, they formed an octarchy. Ella, supporting his invasion in Sussex, like Hengist in Kent, made a Saxon duarchy before the year 500. When Cerdic erected the state of Wessex in 519, a triarchy appeared; East Anglia made it a tetrarchy; Essex a pentarchy. The success of Ida, after 547, having established a sovereignty of Angles in Bernicia, the island beheld an hexarchy. When the northern Ella penetrated, in 560, southward of the Tees, his kingdom of Deira produced an heptarchy. In 586, the Angles branching from Deira into the regions south of the Humber, the state of Mercia completed an Anglo-Saxon octarchy. As the Anglo-Saxons warred with each other, sometimes one state was for a time absorbed by another, sometimes, after an interval, it emerged again. If that term ought to be used which expresses the complete establishment of the Anglo-Saxons, it should be octarchy; if not, then the denomination must vary as the tide of conquest fluctuated.

It was in a slow progression of conquest that the nations comprized under the title of Anglo-Saxons possessed themselves

¹ Although most of our ancient annalists and modern historians have retained the word heptarchy, yet one old chronicler, I perceive, has more critically said, "Provincia Britonum, quæ modo Anglia nominatur, Saxonum temporibus in octo regna divisa fuerit." Th.

Rudborne's Hist. Major. Winton. 1. Anglia Sacra, 187.—Matth. Westm. 198. as correctly states the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to have been eight. He names the eight kings who reigned in 586, p. 200.

of the different districts of the island. The Britons yielded no part till it had been dearly purchased; and almost a century and a half passed away from the first arrival of Hengist to the full establishment of the octarchy. We are not able to give the successive conquests in exact chronology; we cannot state in what year each British principality was destroyed, or each county subdued; we only know, that from the sea coasts where they landed, the invaders fought their way with pertinacity, but with difficulty, to the inland provinces.

But the Anglo-Saxons, as they advanced, did not exterminate the Britons, though many devastations must have accompanied their progress. The fierce warriors of Germany wanted husbandmen, artisans, and menials for domestic purposes. There can be no doubt that the majority of the British population was preserved to be useful to their conquerors. It is however true, that some Britons disdained the Saxon yoke, and emigrated to other countries. Armorica, or Bretagne, was the refuge to many. From others, Cornwall and Wales received a large accession of population; and some are even said to have visited Holland.*

The most indignant of the Cymry retired into Wales. There, the bards, fugitives like the rest, consoled the expatriated Britons with the hope that the day would afterwards arrive when they should have their full revenge, by driving out the Saxon hordes. Not only Taliesin sung this animating prediction;³ Myrddin also promised the Britons that they should

Restoration
of the Britons
predicted.

* H. Cannegieter, in his dissertation de Brittenburgo, Hag. Co. 1734, has particularly examined this point. His decision is that Brittenburg was named from the Britons, but was built by the Romans. He prefers to the assertion of Gerbrandus, that the

Britons fled from the Saxons to Holland, and built Catwyck on the Rhine; the opinion of Colinus, the ancient monastical poet, who admits that they visited and ravaged it, but affirms that they did not settle.

³ A serpent with chains,
Towering and plundering,
With armed wings
From Germania;

again be led by their majestic chief, and be again victorious. He boldly announced, that in this happy day should be restored to every one his own; that then the horns of gladness should proclaim the song of peace, the serene days of Cambrian happiness.⁴ The anticipation of this blissful æra gave rapture to the Cymry, even in their stony paradise of Wales.⁵ The proud invaders mocked the vaunting prophecy, and, to render it nugatory, they unpeopled some of their native coasts on the Baltic,⁶ and filled Britain with an active and hardy race, whose augmenting population and persevering valour at length carried the hated Saxon sceptre even to the remotest corners of venerated Anglesey.

The Anglo-Saxons war with each other.

As soon as the Anglo-Saxon potentates were released from the pressure of the Britons, and began to breathe in security,

This will overrun
All Loegria and Brydon,
From the land of the Lochlin sea
To the Severn.

After mentioning that the Britons will be exiles and prisoners to Saxony, he adds,

Their lord they shall praise,
Their language preserve,
Their country lose

Except wild Wales,

Till the destined period of their triumph revolves,

Then the Britons will obtain

The crown of their land,
And the strange people

Will vanish away.

He concludes with declaring that Michael has predicted the future happiness of Britain. Taliesin, p. 94.

Gildas, p. 8. states, that the Saxons had a prophecy that they should ravage Britain 150 years, and enjoy it 150. The limitation has rather a Cambrian aspect.

⁴ Myrddhin's Afallenau, p. 153. Golyddan, in his Arymes Prydein vawr, endeavours to inspire his countrymen by a similar prediction. His whole poem deserves a careful translation. The first part is a review of the transactions between Hengist and the Britons. It is in the Welsh Archæology, v. 1. p. 156—159.

⁵ These epithets are Welsh. Stony Wales is a phrase of Taliesin, and Llywarch

denominates Powys "the paradise of the Cymry," p. 119.

⁶ Bede affirms the complete emigration of the Angles; he says, their country "ab eo tempore usque hodie manere desertus," l. 1. c. 15. So king Alfred implies "on thæm landum eardodon Engle ær hi hider on land comon," in his Orosius, p. 25. To the like purpose Nennius, "ita ut insulas de quibus venerant absque habitatore relinquerunt." c. 37.

and to feel their strength in the growing population of their provinces, and in the habitual submission of the natives, their propensity to war, and their avarice of power, excited them to turn their arms upon each other.

The successes of the West Saxons and the South Saxons had turned off from Kent the torrent of British hostility. Thus left at leisure for the indulgence of youthful turbulence, Ethelbert, the fourth successor of Hengist, presumed to defy and invade Cealwin, the king of Wessex. Cealwin despised the warrior of sixteen, collected his troops, defeated Ethelbert at Wimbledon, and threatened the Kentish Jutes with the subjection which they had armed to impose.⁷

568.
Ethelbert
invades
Cealwin.

Although by this time all the Saxon kingdoms on the coasts of the island had been established, yet the Cymry still retained many of the interior regions; but as hostility surrounded them on every quarter, their tenure of these districts was insecure. The brother of Cealwin⁸ defeated them at Bedford, and, marching back to Wessex, through that part of Britain which was then unsubdued, took Leighton, Ailesbury, Benington, and Ensham.⁹

571.
Conquests of
the West
Saxons.

Six years afterwards, Cealwin and Cuthwin maintained another engagement near Derham, in Gloucestershire, in which three British kings fell, Conmail, Condidan, and Farinmail. Three cities, with the adjacent country, were the booty of the victory; Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath.¹⁰

577.

⁷ Sax. Chron. p. 21. Flor. Wigorn. 222. M. West. 196. Hunting. 315. Malmsbury attributes the aggression to Ethelbert's desire of engrossing *præ antiquitate familiæ primas partes sibi*, p. 12.

⁸ Saxon Chron. 22. and Flor. Wig. 222. name the brother of Cealwin, Cuthulf. H. Hunting. p. 315. Cutha.—Ethelwerd, 834. entitles the captured towns *regias villas*.

⁹ About this time, in 573, the Saxons obtained a settlement in France. They were placed in the Armorican region after their irruption, in *finibus Bajocassium et Nam-*

netensium. Bouquet's *recueil des historiens des Gaules*, v. 2. p. 250.—Hence Gregory of Tours calls them *Saxones Bajocassos*, l. 5. c. 10. It is curious that they were sent against the British settlers in Gaul, who defeated them. Gregory, l. 5. c. 27. Their district Charles the Bald, in his *Laws apud Silvacum*, calls *Linguam Saxoniam*. Bouquet, p. 250.

¹⁰ Saxon Chron. 22. Ethelwerd, 835. *tres urbes clariores*. Huntingdon, 315. *tres urbes excellentissimas*.—These cities were of consequence in those early days. Conmail and

Seven years afterwards we find Cealwin again pursuing his hostilities on the Severn against the Britons. At Frithern a bloody contest took place, in which, after vicissitudes of victory, the Saxons prevailed, and obtained much plunder and country for their prize.¹²

The spirit of Cealwin expresses the general spirit of the times, restless, warring, greedy of conquest. On the death of Cissa, the kingdom of Sussex fell into his hands.¹³ By annexing it to West Saxony,¹⁴ he changed the Saxon octarchy into a temporary heptarchy.

Cealwin's
death.

591.

Dreaded for his power and ambition, Cealwin now preponderated over the other Saxon monarchs;¹⁴ but his prosperity changed before his death. His nephew, Ceolric, allied with the Cymry and the Scoti, against him; and all the valour and conduct of Cealwin, which had so often given victory to his standard, could not rescue him from disgrace, in the thirty-third year of his reign, at Wodnesbury, in Wilts.¹⁵ His death soon followed, and the unnatural kinsman succeeded to the

Condidan seem to have been the Caranmail and Cynddylan mentioned in one of the elegies of Llywarch Hen. p. 71—105. Farinmail was Fernvail, then reigning in Gwent, or Monmouthshire. Regis. Landav. ap. Langhorn, 115. In his elegy on Cynddylan, Meigant mentions a predatory expedition of the Britons under Morial to Caer Llwydcoed, p. 160.

¹² Sax. Chron. 22. Florent. Wig. 224. Hunt. 315.—M. West. omits the ultimate success of Cealwin, and mentions the affair as a British victory, p. 198. Usher, 570. places the battle at Stanmore, in Westmoreland; a very improbable situation for Cealwin to have fought in. Soon after this contest, Langhorn quotes Joannes Salisb. Polycrat. 5. c. 17. to say, that paulo post Anglorum introitum impositum fuisse Angliæ nomen. The passage of our elegant monk is, l. 6. c. 17. p. 197. and merely mentions that "ab inventu Saxonum in insulam appellatur Anglia." These words determine no chronology like paulo post; they only express one of the consequences of the Saxon invasion.

¹² Matt. West. 201.

¹³ The people of Wessex were anciently named Gewisi, Bede, l. 3. c. 7.

¹⁴ Bede, l. 2. c. 5. He was the second Saxon prince so distinguished.—Matt. West. says generally, 'magnificatum est nomen ejus vehementer,' p. 197.—Langhorn fancied that he was the Gormund, whom the Britons mention with horror. Chron. Reg. Angliæ, 123. This Gormund, by some styled king of the Africans, by others a pirate of Norway or Ireland, is fabled to have invaded the Britons with 166,000 Africans. Rad. dic. 559. 3 Gale, and Jeffry, 12. 2. Alanus de Insulis, l. 1. p. 25. gives him 360,000. A foreign author enthrones him the sovereign of England for forty years!! Joh. Gerb. Leidensis, l. 1. c. 13. ap. Usher, 571.

¹⁵ Sax. Chron. 22. Ceola, as Flor. Wig. 225. names him, was son of Cuthulf. Ethelwerd, 835.—Wodnesbury stands upon the remarkable ditch called Wansdike, which Camden thought a Saxon work to divide Mercia from Wessex, and which others have supposed to have been a defence against the incursions of the Britons.

crown he had usurped. A short reign of five years ended his ambition, and Ceolwulf acceded.

CHAP.
IV.

591.

The disaster of Cealwin completed the safety of Kent. Ethelbert had preserved his authority in that kingdom, and at length succeeded to the insulary predominance which Cealwin had enjoyed. Whether this superiority was the result of actual conquest, or was a dignity conceded to one of the Saxon monarchs by the rest, in compliance with some ancient custom, or in imitation of the British unbennaeth, is not sufficiently disclosed.¹⁶ In 597, the monks sent by Gregory the Great, and conducted by Austin, arrived in Thanet as missionaries, voluntarily risking their safety to teach the Anglo-Saxons the truths they revered.¹⁷ Ethelbert, in a manly speech, granted them permission to promulgate their opinions, and they succeeded in diffusing through Kent, and of occasioning ultimately throughout the island, a great mental revolution.

Christianity
introduced.

While Ceolwulf was governing Wessex, Ethelfrith, the grandson of Ida, reigned in Bernicia,¹⁸ and attacked the Britons with vehemence and perseverance. None peopled more districts of the ancient Cymry with Angles, or more enslaved them with tributary services. It is probable that he extended his conquests to the Trent. Excited by his progress, Aidan advanced with a great army of the Cumbrian Britons, to repress him. The Angles met him at Degsastan, which seems to be Dawston, near Jedburgh; a furious battle ensued, which the determination of the combatants made very deadly. The brother of Ethelfrith perished, with all his followers. At

603.

Successes of
Ethelfrith.

¹⁶ Bede, l. 2. c. 5. names him as the third qui imperavit all the provinces south of the Humber. Malmsbury amplifies this into "omnes nationes Anglorum præter Northanhimbros continuis victoriis dominatus sub jugum traxit," p. 10.—The Saxon Chron. calls him one of the seven bretwaldas who preceded Egbert. What is the proper force of this bretwalda, or governor of Britain, is doubtful. It can hardly imply conquest, because Ella the First is not said

to have conquered Hengist, Cerdic, Arthur, or the Mercian Britons his contemporaries.

¹⁷ Bede, l. 1. c. 25. Ethelbert had a residence at Reculver. MSS. ap. Dugdale, p. 26.

¹⁸ After Ida, his son Adda succeeded for seven years. After him Clappa reigned five years; Theodwolf, one; Freothulf and Theodric each seven; and Ethelric two. Flor. Wig. 221.

BOOK
II.

length the Scottish Britons gave way, and were mowed down with such slaughter, that the king, with few attendants, escaped.¹⁹ They forebore for a long interval to molest the Angles again.

604.
Essex converted.

Austin having converted Kent, sent Mellitus into Essex,²⁰ who induced Sabert, the nephew of Ethelbert, to accept the benevolent faith of Christianity.²¹

607.

The colonists of Sussex, endeavouring to throw off the yoke of Ceolwulf, the West Saxon king, who is mentioned as always engaged in quarrels with the Angles, Britons, Picts, or Scots, engaged in a conflict with him, which, disastrous to both armies, was most fatal to the assertors of their independence.²²

607.

The Bernician conqueror, Ethelfrith, renewed his war with the Cymry. He reached Chester, through a course of victory.

or

612.

Apart from the forces of the Welsh, assembled under Brocmail, king of Powys, he perceived the monks of Bangor, twelve hundred in number, praying for the success of their countrymen; he chose to confound them with the soldiers armed to oppose him; he destroyed them;²³ and, appalled by their fate, the courage of the troops of Brocmail wavered and fled.²⁴ Ethelfrith obtained a decisive conquest. Ancient Bangor itself soon fell into his hands, and was demolished;²⁵

Bangor destroyed.

¹⁹ Bede, l. 1. c. 34. Sax. Chron. 24.—The position of this, as of most of the Saxon battles, is disputed.

²⁰ The metropolis of Essex was London, which Bede, l. 2. c. 3. describes as the *emporium multorum populorum terra marique venientium*.—It holds the same character in the Roman authors. Thus, amid all our revolutions, London has for near twenty ages preserved her commercial predominance.

²¹ Sabert built St. Paul's, Bede, l. 2. c. 3. and St. Peter's, now Westminster Abbey, on the site of a temple of Apollo in Thorneia, the island of Thorn. See the authors in Usher, 575. The foundation of Westminster is dated in 618, by W. Thorn, x Script. p. 1768.—See Dugdale Mon. 1. p. 56.

²² Sax. Chron. p. 23—25. H. Hunt. 315, 316.

²³ The chronology of this battle is disputed. The Saxon Chronicle dates it in

607, p. 25. Flor. Wig. 603. The Annals of Ulster in 612. Matt. West. in 603, p. 204. The ancient Welsh chronologer, in the Cambrian Reg. for 1796, places it in 602, and fourteen years before the battle of Meigen, p. 313. Bede says, that Austin had been *jam multo ante tempore ad caelestia regna sublato*, l. 2. c. 2. but Austin died in 605.

²⁴ Brocmail was one of the patrons of Taliesin, who commemorates this struggle.

I saw the oppression of the tumult; the wrath, and tribulation;

The blades gleaming on the bright helmets;
The battle against the Lord of Fame in the dales of Hafren;

Against Brocmail of Powys, who loved my Muse. Taliesin, p. 66.

²⁵ Ancient Bangor was about eight miles distant from Chester. Caius de Antiq. Cantab. l. 1. ap. Usher, 133.—Leland says, 'the

the noble monastery was levelled to the earth; its vast library, the collection of ages, the repository of the most precious monuments of the ancient Britons, was consumed;²⁶ half-ruined walls, gates, and rubbish, were all that remained of the magnificent edifice.²⁷ We may presume that the addition of Cheshire to Bernicia was the consequence of the victory.

But amidst their misfortunes, the Cymry sometimes triumphed. Ceolwulph from Wessex advanced upon them, not merely to the Severn, but crossed it into the province of Glamorgan. Affrighted at his force, the inhabitants hastened to Tewdric their former king, who had quitted his dignity in behalf of his son Mowric, to lead a solitary life among the beautiful rocks and woodlands of Tintern. They solicited him to reassume the military command, in which he had never known disgrace, if he sympathized in the welfare of his countrymen or his son. The royal hermit beheld the dreaded Saxons on the Wye, but the remembrance of his own achievements inspired him with hope. He put on his forsaken armour, conducted the tumult of battle with his former skill, and drove the invaders over the Severn. A mortal wound in the head arrested him in the full enjoyment of his glory, and he breathed his last wishes for his country's safety at the confluence of the Severn and the Wye. The local appellation Mathern, the abbreviation of Merthyr Teudric,²⁸ pointed out his remains to the sympathy of posterity: in the sixteenth century his body was found unconsumed, and the fatal blow on his head was visible.²⁹

610.
Tewdric
defeats
Ceolwulph.

²⁶ cumpace of the abbay was as of a waullid
toun, and yet remaineth the name of a
gate caullid Porth Hogan by north, and
the name of another, port Clays by south.
—Dee syns chaunging the bottom rennith
now thorough the mydle betwyxt thes two
gates, one being a mile dim from the other.
Itiner. v. 5. p. 26.

²⁶ Humph. Lhuyd asserts this. Comm.
Frag. Brit. Descript. 58. and Giraldus Cam-
brensis declares that Chester also was de-
stroyed. De illaud. Wallia, c. 7.

²⁷ Malmsbury, 19.—In the Triads Bangor
is paralleled with the isle of Avallon, and
Caer Caradog, for possessing 2400 religious.
The Bangor of modern note is a city built
by Maelgo on the Meneath, near Anglesey.
Joh. Rossius, ap. Usher, 133.

²⁸ The martyr Tewdric. Usher quotes the
Register of Landaff for this conflict, p. 562.
—Langhorn. Chron. p. 148.

²⁹ Godwin præsul. ap. Usher, 563. In the
chancel of Mathern church an epitaph men-
tions that he lies there entombed. Williams's
Monmouthshire, App. No. 17.

BOOK
II.610.
Distress of
the Welsh.

The condition of the Cambro Britons at this juncture calls for our compassion. They had been driven out of their ancient country; they had retired to those parts of the island, by mountains, woods, marshes, and rivers, secluded from the rest; yet in this retreat they lived with their hands against every man,³⁰ and every man's hand against them; they were the common butt of enterprize to the Angles of Bernicia, and Deira, and Mercia; to the Saxons of Wessex, and to the Gwiddelians of Ireland; and they were always as eager to assail as to defend. The wild prophecies of enthusiasts, who mistook hope for inspiration, having promised to them, in no long period, the enjoyment of the soil from which they had been exiled, produced in them a perpetual appetite for war. Their independent sovereignties fed by their hostile ambition the flames of domestic quarrels, and accelerated the ruin of their independence. The Cymry maintained the unequal conflict against the Anglo-Saxons with wonderful bravery, and did not lose the sovereignty of their country until the improvements of their conquerors made the conquest a blessing.

614.
Cynegils'
victory.

Cynegils with the West Saxons again assailed some branches of the Britons. If Bampton in Devonshire be the place which the Saxon annalist denominates Beamdune, the princes of Cornwall were the objects of attack.³¹ When the armies met, Cynegils surprized the Britons by drawing up his forces into an arrangement which was not common to that age. This unusual display of military skill affected them with a sudden panic, and they quitted the field early, with the loss of above two thousand men.

616.
Death of
Ethelbert.

On the death of Ethelbert, Kent relapsed for awhile into paganism, and Eadbald lost the preponderance which his father had enjoyed.³² On Sabert's death, Christianity was also

³⁰ Matt. West. paints this forcibly, p. 198. and 199.

³¹ Sax. Chron. 25. Hunt. 316. Camden supposes the place to have been Bindon in Dorsetshire, 1 Gough's ed. 44. The editor

mentions favourably the opinion of Gibson, which is in the text, ib. p. 50.

³² Bede, l. 2. c. 5. Malmesbury, l. 1. p. 10. Redwald became the Bretwalda after Ethelbert. Sax. Chron. p. 71.

denounced in Essex;³³ and Redwald of East Anglia, though he embraced the new profession in Kent, deserted it in his own dominions.³⁴

Procopius has preserved an incident respecting the East Anglians, which occurred in the sixth century, and may be noticed before we mention another of their greatest exploits.

Between the Rhine and the Northern Ocean, the Varni inhabited.³⁵ Their king solicited a princess of East Anglia for his son, and the hand of the lady was promised. On his death-bed it occurred to him, that an alliance with the Franks, his neighbours, would be more profitable to his people than the friendship of the Angles, who were separated from the Varni by the sea. In obedience to the political expediency, Radiger, the prince, married his father's widow, his step-mother, because she was sister of Theodebert the Franc. The rejected East Anglian would not brook the indignity; her slighted charms demanded revenge, because in the estimation of her countrymen the purity of female chastity was sullied if the maiden once wooed was not wedded. Her brother and the East Anglian warriors thought her quarrel just; a large fleet sailed under her auspices, and landed on the Rhine. A part of the army encamped round her; the rest, with one of her brothers, defeated the Varni, and penetrated the country. Radiger fled. The Angles returned to the angry lady, glorying in their victory. She received them with disdain. They had done nothing, as they had not brought Radiger to her feet. Again her selected champions sallied forth, and Radiger at last was taken in a wood. The captive entered her tent, to receive his doom. But the heart of the East Anglian was still his own. He pleaded his father's commands, and the

CHAP.
IV.

Expedition
of the East
Anglians
to the Con-
tinent.

534-547.

³³ Bede, l. 2. c. 5. Sabert was buried in Westminster. Langhorn, p. 154.

³⁴ Bede, l. 2. c. 15.

³⁵ The editor of the great collection des Historiens des Gaules, Paris 1741, remarks

(referring to Valesius) that Procopius erred when he placed the Varni on the right bank of the Rhine, and that he is more credible when he places them nearer the Danes, v. 2. p. 42.

solicitations of his chiefs. The sweet melody of flattery and love may have completed his apology. The conquering beauty smiled forgiveness. To accept her hand, and to dismiss her rival, was the only punishment she awarded. Joyfully the prince obeyed, and the sister of Theodebert was repudiated.³⁶

Ethelfrith
seizes Deira.

This event is the only one in the history of East Anglia which can interest our notice before the reign of Redwald. Before this prince it had arrogated no dominating precedence in England. The intemperate ambition of Ethelfrith propelled it into consequence. This king, dissatisfied with his inherited Bernicia, and his trophies in Scotland and Wales, invaded Deira, to which Edwin the son of Ella, at the age of three years, had succeeded; and by expelling the little infant, converted the Saxon states in England into an hexarchy. Edwin was carried to North Wales, and was generously educated by Cadvan.³⁷

Edwin in
East Anglia.

After many changes of residence, Edwin, in his maturer age, implored an asylum in the court of Redwald. Impatient that Edwin should be alive, Ethelfrith sent messengers to the East Anglian sovereign, requiring him to surrender the youth, with an haughty menace of chastisement if he refused. Redwald remembered the unvarying successes of Ethelfrith, and at length determined to make Edwin the victim of his tranquillity. A friend to the young exile discovered his intentions, and counselled a precipitate flight, but Edwin courageously replied, "As Redwald has received me kindly, I will not shew him an ungrateful mistrust. I have been a wanderer long enough. If he is intimidated from protecting me, of whom shall I obtain a shelter? Ignominy will disgrace him, if he betrays me; but no dishonour will stain my memory: I had rather perish with honour, than continue to live a friendless fugitive."

³⁶ Procopius Goth. Hist. l. 4. p. 468— of the reign of Theodebert, vol. 3. c. 38.
471. Gibbon places this incident between p. 627.
534 and 547, which were the extreme terms ³⁷ Alured Beverl. l. 6. p. 90.

The queen of Redwald pleaded for the youthful exile: "A king should not sell a distressed friend, nor violate his faith for gold; no ornament is so ennobling as good faith." Inspired with her fortitude, Redwald resolved to keep sacred the duties of hospitality.

The preparations of Ethelfrith, disappointed of his prey, compelled him to arm; and he attacked Ethelfrith, before he had collected all his troops, on the east bank of the Idel in Nottinghamshire.³⁸ The Northumbrian king, by his experienced valour and veteran soldiers, supplied the disparity of his troops, and balanced the contest. The East Anglians advanced in three divisions; one of these, Rainer, the son of Redwald, led. The ancient fortune of Ethelfrith befriended him, and the prince and his warriors were annihilated. Redwald was stimulated to more determined exertions; he still outnumbered his opponent, and his other divisions were firm. Ethelfrith, unused to such resistance, and impatient for the event, rushed on the East Anglians with a dangerous impetuosity. His friends did not follow his injudicious courage; he was separated from them, and fell at last on a great mound of enemies, prostrated by his sword.³⁹ Edwin also signalized himself. Redwald not only re-instated him in Deira, but also subjected Bernicia to his power. Thus the hexarchy continued. The sons of the slain usurper fled into Scotland.⁴⁰ Redwald ascended to the pre-eminence of Ella, Cealwin, and Ethelbert; and, on his death, it was assumed by Edwin.⁴¹

The three brothers who governed Essex were attacked by the West Saxon kings. The army of the sons of Sabert was almost destroyed.⁴² Redwald was succeeded by Eorpwald.

CHAP.
IV.

617.

Redwald protects him,
and defeats
Ethelfrith.

Ethelfrith
falls.

Edwin re-
stored.

623.

³⁸ Bede, l. 2. c. 12.—Malmsbury, p. 18.

³⁹ Hunting. l. 2. p. 316.—Sax. Chron. 27.

⁴⁰ Polychron. 3 Gale, 229.—Sax. Chron. 27.—Bede, l. 3. c. 1.

⁴¹ Bede, l. 2. c. 5.

⁴² Bede, ib.—Huntingdon, 316.—Flor. Wig. 231.

BOOK
II.

626.

Attacked by
an assassin.Lilla's heroic
friendship.Edwin me-
ditates on
christianity.

626.

Rise of
Penda.

The life of Edwin was endangered by the plots of a coward. Cwichelm of Wessex, not daring to meet him in the prepared combat, sent an assassin, Eomer, with a poisoned dagger of double edge; his hope was, that if accident should make the wound superficial, the venom might cause it to be fatal. In the festival of Easter, Eomer approached the royal city on the Derwent, and was admitted to the presence as a messenger from Cwichelm. On the preceding night, Edwin had been made a father by his queen. The wretch had abilities enough to begin the delivery of a fictitious embassy; in the middle of it he clenched his dagger, and rushed upon the king. Lilla, the favourite minister of Edwin, perceived the intention, but he had no shield to avert the blow. The king was off his guard—the mortal dagger was raised;—with self-devoting friendship, Lilla threw himself between his master and the assassin, voluntarily received the descending blow, which was urged with such vehemence, that it reached through the body of Lilla into the king, and expired without regret. Though an hundred swords soon waved against him, the determined murderer stood on his defence, and was not overpowered till he had made another victim to his villany. The wound of Edwin disappointed the criminal Cwichelm. The king recovered, and retaliated with ample and personal punishment on the base aggressor.⁴³

Edwin permitted the introduction of Christianity into his dominions; and, after great deliberation with his counsel, adopted it himself, and destroyed the idolatrous temples.⁴⁴

In this year a malevolent chief appeared in the Saxon octarchy. The inland districts had become united into one state, which bore the name of Mercia, and Penda succeeded to the crown at that age when other men are about to exchange it for the tomb. He was fifty years of age when he

⁴³ Bede, l. 2. c. 9.—Saxon Chron. 27.—Flor. Wig. 232.

⁴⁴ Bede, l. 2. c. 13. At this period christianity entered China in the reign of Tai-

cum, who appears to have been a very distinguished prince. Op. Confuci. Tab. Chron. p. 53.

began his reign, but he had the health to wear it for thirty years,⁴⁵ to the terror and calamity of the Anglo-Saxon princes, all of whom he harassed and endangered; some he sent prematurely to their graves.

CHAP.
IV.

626.

Before he had filled his throne two years, his restless spirit exerted its destructive power. He attacked Cirencester, which belonged to Wessex, and engaged with Cynegils and Cwichelm, its sovereigns, in an obstinate conflict. The sun left the western sky before the combatants would separate; when its beams returned in the morning, the losses of each became visible, and a pacific negociation was preferred to another battle.⁴⁶

His contest
with Wessex.
628.

Edwin, in Northumbria, had now reached the summit of human prosperity; a considerable part of Wales submitted to his power, and the Menavian Islands.⁴⁷ The internal police which prevailed through his dominions was so vigilant, that it became an aphorism to say, that a woman with her new-born infant might walk from sea to sea without fear of insult. As in those days travelling was difficult and tedious, and no places existed for the entertainment of guests, it was an important and kind convenience to his people, that he caused stakes to be fixed in the highways where he had seen a clear spring; brazen dishes were chained to them, to refresh the weary sojourner, whose fatigues Edwin had himself experienced. In another reign these would have been placed only

Edwin's
police.

⁴⁵ Sax. Chron. 28.—Flor. Wig. dates his accession 627, p. 232. Penda was the eleventh descendant from Woden by his son Wintlæg, ib. Hunt. 316.—Nennius says of him, "qui primus separavit regnum Merciorum a regno Nordorum," p. 117. But before him there was Cearl, a king of the Mercians, whose daughter, Quenburga, was the first wife of Edwin during his exile. Bede, 2. c. 14. Some chronicles state that Crida, the grandfather of Penda, was the first Mercian king, and that Ceorl, a kinsman of his son Wibba, preceded Penda. Rad. ap. Higden. Polychron. p. 229.

⁴⁶ Huntingdon, 316. Saxon Chron. 29.

Flor. Wig. 233. and Matt. West. 217, attest the pacification.—Some place it in 628, others in 629.

⁴⁷ Bede, 2. c. 9. Ib. c. 16. The Menavian islands were Eubonia and Mona, or Man and Anglesey.—Bede, c. 9. states that Anglesey contained 960 hydes or families, and Man 300. The fertility of Anglesey occasioned the proverb, Mon mam Cymry; Mona the mother of Wales. Pryse's Pref. to Wynne's Caradoc.—The king of Gwynedd had his royal seat in it at Aberfraw, which is now a small village. Camb. Reg. 1796, p. 402.

BOOK

II.

648.

His prosper-
ity and its
change.His conduct
to Cadwallon
and Wales.

to have been taken away; but such was the dread of his inquiring justice, or such the general affection for his virtues, that no man misused them. It is remarked by Bede, as an instance of his dignity and power, that his banner was borne before him whenever he rode out, either in peace or war. When he walked abroad, the tufa preceded him.⁴⁸

For seventeen years he reigned victorious over his enemies, and felicitating to his subjects. But his reign was ended violently. The misfortunes of Edwin may have resulted from his ambition. The tender years of his life had been cherished by the father of Cadwallon, the sovereign of North Wales; but when Edwin had obtained the sceptre of Ethelfrith, he waged furious war with the son of his host. It became Edwin to resist if attacked, and he justly chastised, by a defeat, Cadwallon, who had penetrated to Widdrington, about eight miles north of Morpeth.⁴⁹ But he might have been satisfied with defensive war, and have used sparingly the rights of victory against his early friend and protector. He chose to prefer power to gratitude. He pursued Cadwallon into Wales, and chased him into Ireland.⁵⁰ So severely did he exercise his advantages, that the British Triads characterize him as one of the three plagues which befel the Isle of Anglesey.⁵¹

⁴⁸ We know, from a passage of Vegetius, corrected by Lipsius, that the tufa was one of the Roman ensigns; and we are informed by Isidorus, that Augustus introduced a globe upon a spear among his signa, to denote a subjected world. Lipsius is of opinion that this was the tufa alluded to by Bede.—*De Militia Romana*, l. 4. c. 5. p. 169. ed. Antwerp, 1598.

⁴⁹ Jeffry's account of the quarrel is, that Edwin wished to wear his crown independently of the Welsh prince, who was advised to insist on his subjection, and threatened to cut off his head if he dared to crown it. l. 12. c. 2, 3.

⁵⁰ The 34th Triad states, that Cadwallon and his family lived seven years in Ireland, p. 7.—Jeffry, with his usual facetiousness,

annexes a pretty nurse tale to Cadwallon's exile. Sailing to Armorica, he was driven by a tempest on the island of Garnereia; the loss of his companions affected him to sickness; for three days he refused food, on the fourth he asked for venison; a day's search discovered none. To save his king, Brian cut an ample piece out of his own thigh, roasted it on a spit, and presented it to the king as genuine venison. It was greedily devoured. The wind changed, they got safe to Armorica, and Brian afterwards killed the second-sighted magician of Edwin, l. 12. c. 4. and 7.

⁵¹ Matt. West. 224, in his *Combustis Urbibus et Colonis destructis*, explains the direful scourge.

For seven years his authority continued over Gwynedd. But his ambition only flattered him into ruin. A slow but unerring retribution avenges the violations of morality. Cadwallon besought the aid of Penda, and the restless sexagenary armed with all the warlike activity of youth. The confederated kings met Edwin in Hatfield Chace in Yorkshire, on the twelfth of October. A desperate battle was ended by the death of Edwin, in his forty-eighth year. One of his children, and most of his army, perished.⁵²

Edwin's fate.

The victors ravaged Northumbria; the hoary Penda exercised peculiar cruelty on the Christian inhabitants. Consternation overspread the country. The royal widow fled in terror, under the protection of Paulinus, and a valiant soldier, with some of her children, to her kinsman in Kent.⁵³

On Edwin's death, the ancient divisions of Northumbria again prevailed, and an heptarchy re-appeared. His cousin Osric, the grandson of Ella, succeeded to Deira, and Eanfrid, the long exiled son of Ethelfrith, to Bernicia: both restored paganism. The Welsh king Cadwallon, full of projects of revenge against the nation of the Angles, continued his war. Osric rashly ventured to besiege him in a strong town,⁵⁴ but an unexpected sally of Cadwallon destroyed the king of Deira. For a year the victor desolated Northumbria; his success struck Eanfrid with terror, and his panic hurried him to his fate. He went with twelve soldiers to sue peace of the Welsh-

Cadwallon's
successes.

⁵² Osric fell before his father. Bede, l. 2. c. 20.—Sax. Chron. 29.—Gibson and Carte place the battle in Hatfield Chace.—Langhorn prefers Hethfield in Derbyshire, near Cheshire, 176; others more absurdly have glanced on Hatfield in Herts. Near the Yorkshire town many intrenchments are to be seen. I will not aver that rats shun the town, or that the sparrows are displeased with Lindham in the moors below it. Gibson's Add. to Camden, 725.—The men of Powys so distinguished themselves in this battle, that they obtained from Cadwallon a boon of fourteen privileges. The Welsh call the scene of conflict Meigen. Cynddelw, cited in Owen's Llywarch, p. 117.

⁵³ Eadbald received them honourably, Bede, l. 2. c. 20.—Sax. Chron. 29.—He gave her the villam maximam Lininge (Limning) cum omnibus adjacentibus, in which she built a monastery. Hugo. Candid. Cænob. Burg. Hist. p. 37. ed. Sparke. She exhibited a novelty to the English, which produced serious consequences. She took the veil. Smith's notes on Bede, 101.—The hospitality of Eadbald seems not to have been unchequered; her apprehension of him and Oswald induced her to send her children to France, to Dagobert, their relation. Bede, c. 20.

⁵⁴ Bede, l. 3. c. 1. The town was a municipium, and was therefore in all probability York. Smith's notes on Bede, 103.

BOOK
II.

633.

man. Notwithstanding the sacred purpose of his visit, he was put to death.

The swords of Cadwallon and his army seemed the agents destined to fulfil their cherished prophecy. The fate of the Anglo-Saxons was now about to arrive; three of their kings had been already offered up to the shades of the injured Cymry; an Arthur had revived in Cadwallon.—But the lying prophecies of hope, have been the experience and the complaint of ages.

634.

Triumphant with the fame of fourteen great battles and sixty skirmishes,⁵⁵ Cadwallon despised Oswald, the brother and successor of Eanfrid, who presented himself in arms to impede his full success. The royal youth, who had accepted the dangerous crown, attempted to become the deliverer of the land. With humble confidence he committed his cause to the arbitration of Providence,⁵⁶ and calmly awaited the decision on the banks of the Denise.⁵⁷ There, says Llywarch, “the enthraller of Lloegyr, the fierce affliction of his foes, the prosperous lion,” fell. “The wrath of slaughter hastened to make the eagles full.”⁵⁸ Cadwallon and the flower of his army perished. The return of the Cymry to their ancient country never became probable again.

Oswald de-
feats him.

⁵⁵ Llywarch Hen. p. 111.

⁵⁶ The piety of Oswald previous to the battle is expressed by Bede. To his arrayed army he loudly exclaimed: “Let us kneel to the omnipotent Lord, the existing and the true, and unite to implore his protection against a fierce and arrogant enemy. He knows that we have undertaken a just war for the safety of our people.”—The army obeyed the royal mandate, l. 3. c. 2.

⁵⁷ Camden places this battle at Dilston, formerly Devilston, on a small brook which empties into the Tine, 854, Gib. Ed.—Smith, with greater probability, marks Erringburn as the rivulet on which Cadwallon perished, and the fields either of Cockley, Hallington,

or Bingfield, as the scene of conflict. App. to Bede, 721. The Angles called it Hefenfield, which name, according to tradition, Bingfield bore.

⁵⁸ Llywarch, 111. 115. 117. This ancient bard composed an elegy on his friend.—Jeffry, with his usual dexterity of misunderstanding and mistating, though he admits Oswald to have conquered at Havenfield, yet has sent there Penda to be the person defeated, and instead of suffering his Cadwallon to perish there, inflames him with rage at the disaster, and dispatches him like lightning in chase of Oswald, whom he permits Penda to kill; Cadwallon then became possessed of all Britain, l. 12. c. 10. c. 11.

CHAP. V.

Continuation of the History of the Octarchy to the Death of Ina in 728.

THE piety of Oswald was sincere, and influenced his conduct; he obtained a bishop from Icolm-kill to instruct his rude subjects; and he earnestly laboured to advance their moral tuition. His own example strengthened his recommendations on that essential duty, without which all human talents, and all human aggrandizement, are unavailing decorations. In the festival of Easter a silver dish was laid before him, full of dainties; while the blessing was about to be pronounced, the servant appointed to relieve the poor, informed the king, that the street was crowded with the needy, soliciting alms. The presence of the delicacies might inflame appetite, but they also suggested forcibly the reflection, that while he was feasting with luxury, many of his subjects, beings of feelings, appetites, and necessities like his own, were struggling hard with poverty. He could not revel when others so near to him were starving; and he ordered the food, untouched, to be given to the supplicants, and the silver dish to be divided among them.* The beggar for one instant participated in the enjoyments of a king, and rank was admonished to look with compassion on the misery which surrounds it.

Oswald had the satisfaction of perceiving the blessings of Christianity diffused into Wessex. A spirit so lowly and so charitable must have powerfully felt the beauties of its benign

CHAP.

V.

634.

Oswald
reigns.

* Bede, l. 3. c. 6. Oswald was nepos united Deira and Bernicia, the Saxon states
Edwini regis ex sorore Acha. Ib.—As he formed, during his reign, an hexarchy.

BOOK
II.

642.

Slain by
Penda.

morality. He stood sponsor for Cynegils, who received baptism. The nation followed the example of the king.²

While Oswald was benefiting his age by a display of those gentle virtues which above all others are fitted to ameliorate the human character, the Mercian tyrant was extending distress to every province which his sword could reach. He expelled Cenwalch, the son and successor of Cynegils, from Wessex, for repudiating his sister, who lived three years in exile in Essex;³ and he destroyed the benevolent Oswald, at Oswestry in Shropshire, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, and the ninth of his reign. Oswald breathed his last sigh in prayer for his friends.⁴

Insatiable in his ferocity, Penda caused the head and limbs of Oswald to be severed from his body, and exposed on stakes.⁵ He proceeded through Northumbria with devastations, and finding himself unable to carry the royal city of Bebbanburgh by storm, he resolved to destroy it by fire. He demolished all the villages in its vicinity, and encompassing the place with a great quantity of the wood and thatch of the ruins, he surrounded the city with flames. But the wind, which was raising the fiery shower above the city walls, suddenly shifted. The element of destruction, most fatal to man, was driven back from its expected prey on those who had let it loose, and the sanguinary besiegers, in panic or in prudence, abandoned the place.⁶

Penda at-
tacks Bebbanburgh.

643.

Destroys the
kings of East
Anglia.

The Northumbrians rallied under Oswy, the brother of Oswald, and the furious Penda, turning from their rage, burst on East Anglia. Although now seventy years of age, his avidity for the slaughter of battle was undiminished. The East Anglians, fearful lest their reigning monarch should be unable to confront the pressing danger, drew by force from his retreat Sigbercht, who had abdicated his throne for a

² Bede, l. 3. c. 7.³ Bede, ib.⁴ Bede, l. 3. c. 9. and c. 12.⁵ Bede, l. 2. cap. 12. Oswy, his successor, removed and interred them. Ib.⁶ Bede, l. 3. c. 16.

monastery;⁷ and compelled him to head again that army which had prospered under his guidance. He led them to the shock, but disclaiming all weapons of destruction, he used only a wand of command. His skill was excelled by the veteran ability of Penda. Both the East Anglian princes fell. Anna, their successor, afterwards shared their fate.⁸ His crime was unpardonable in the eyes of Penda. He had hospitably received Cenwalch.⁹

654.

In that warlike age, when every man was a soldier, no conquest was permanent, no victor secure. Penda lived to exhibit an instance of this truth. When Oswy assumed the government of Bernicia on the death of Oswald, he placed Oswin, son of Osric, the kinsman of the applauded Edwin, over Deira. Oswin, of a tall and graceful stature, distinguished himself for his humanity and generosity, but could not allay the jealousy of Oswy, who soon became eager to destroy the image he had set up. Oswin shrunk from a martial conflict, and concealed himself, with one faithful soldier, Tondhere, his foster brother, in the house of earl Hunwald, his assured friend. This man betrayed him to Oswy, and suffered him to be murdered.¹⁰ Oswin had given to this wretch the possessions he enjoyed. The soldiers of Oswy, whom he guided, entered the house in the night. Tondhere offered himself to their fury, to save his lord and friend; but had only the consolation to perish with him.¹¹

Oswy.

Oswin
killed.

Oswy was, however, destined to free the world from the direful Penda. When this aged tyrant was preparing to invade

655.

⁷ Sigbercht had succeeded Eorpwald in East Anglia. He is described as a good and pious man. He had sought refuge in France against the enmity of Redwald; and he desired when on his throne, to imitate the useful institutions which he had witnessed among the Franks. This disposition induced him to establish a school for the instruction of youth. Bede, 3. 19. and see the Appendix to his work, 721.

⁸ Anna was the son of Eni, of royal de-

scent. His brother Adelhere acceded on Anna's fall; but in his second year was slain by the army of Oswy. The third brother, Edewald, a pious prince, succeeded. On his death, Adolph, the son of Anna, was crowned. Hist. Elien. MSS. Cott. Lib. Nero. A. 15. and 1 Dugdale, 88.

⁹ Bede, l. 3. cap. 18. and c. 7.

¹⁰ Bede, l. 3. c. 14.

¹¹ Dugd. Mon. 1. 333.

his dominions, he sued long and earnestly for peace in vain. At the age of eighty, the pagan chief still courted the dismal smiles of his Odin, still delighted to prepare the banquet for the falcon and the wolf. Rejecting the negotiations repeatedly offered, he hastened, with his fierce veterans, to add Oswy to the five monarchs whose funeral honours recorded him as their destroyer. With trembling anxiety Oswy met him, with his son Alfred, and a much inferior force; but the battle is not always given to the strong, nor the race to the swift. Penda had filled up the measure of his iniquities, and Providence was weary of a monster, whose appetite for destruction age could not diminish. The awful decree was executed; the vaunting dethroner of kings, with thirty commanders, perished before the enemy, whose greatest strength they had subdued, and whose present feebleness they despised. The plains of Yorkshire witnessed the emancipation of England.¹²

Penda's fate.

By the death of Oswin the hexarchy returned; by the death of Penda a pentarchy appeared, for the kingdom of Mercia became the reward of Oswy.¹³ Scotland felt his power.

Cenwalch.

Cenwalch, the king of Wessex, defeated the Welsh, who had imagined that the man chased by Penda would prove an easy conquest.¹⁴ Pen, in Somersetshire, was the scene of conflict, and the Britons were chased with great slaughter to Pedridan

¹² Sax. Chron. 33. Bede, 3. 24. Winwidfield, near Leeds, was the theatre of the conflict. Camden, Gib. 711.—Bede does not explicitly assert that Penda had three times the number of forces, but that it was so reported. The son of Oswald was engaged against Oswy, but, like Stanley in Bosworth field, he withdrew from the battle, and neutrally awaited its decision. This secession may have produced a panic among the troops of Penda, or by occupying the jealous attention of part of them, diminished the number which rushed against Oswy. The principal leaders of the Mercians fell in defending Penda, and the country happening to be overflowed, more perished by the waters than by the sword.

¹³ Oswy made Peada, the son of Penda, the sovereign of the southern Mercians,

whom the Trent divided from the northern, and who consisted of 5,000 families. Peada received the hand of Alhfleda, daughter of Oswy, as the price of his conversion, but was soon afterwards perfidiously murdered by his wife, ut dicunt. Bede, l. 3. 24. and c. 21. Langhorn, 209.—Camden and Speed, from an author little known, refer the guilt to his mother. Hugo Candidus, a monk of Peterborough monastery, which Peada founded, charges Alhfleda with the crime, p. 4. ed. Sparke. However this be, the Mercian commanders revolted from Oswy, and at length established Wulfhere, the brother of Peada, in the possession of the kingdom.

¹⁴ Huntingdon, l. 2. p. 317. et facta est super progeniem Bruti plaga insanabilis in die illa. Ib.

on the Parret.¹⁵ In the following year, three Mercian chiefs revolted from Oswy, drove away his officers, and presented the crown to Wulfhere, the son of Penda, whom they had cherished in secrecy. The independence of Mercia was successfully asserted against the Northumbrians.¹⁶ It had soon to endure a collision with Wessex. Cenwalch sought to revenge on Wulfhere the disgrace which he had suffered from his father. A struggle ensued, in which the Mercians prevailed, and subjected part of Wessex to the authority of Wulfhere.¹⁷

Mercia had under Peada admitted Christianity; Essex about this period restored it, and during the reign of Wulfhere it was disseminated into Sussex.¹⁸ This province seems to have embraced the opportunity of Cenwalch's exile to terminate its subordination to Wessex. In 645 we hear of Penda's expelling Cenwalch from Wessex; and in 648 we find Edilwalch commencing his reign as king of Sussex;¹⁹ but Edilwalch bowed to the sword of Wulfhere, and in 661 received the Isle of Wight, and the Meanwara district in Hampshire,²⁰ part of the spoils of Wessex, from the bounty of his conqueror. Essex submitted to Wulfhere.²¹

CHAP.
V.
659.

Transactions
in Sussex.

¹⁵ "Et persecuti sunt eos usque ad locum qui Pederydan nuncupatur." Ethelwerd, p. 836.—So the Saxon Chronicle, *hy geflymde oth Pedridan*, p. 39.—This is a place on the Parret, in Somersetshire, the entrance of which was called Pedridan muth, perhaps the Aber Peryddon of Golyddan.

¹⁶ Bede, l. 3. c. 24.

¹⁷ Matt. West. 216.—The issue of this battle has been differently stated. Ethelwerd, 837, makes Cenwalch take Wulfhere prisoner at *Æscedun*, or Aston, near Wallingford, in Berks.—The Saxon Chron. 39. and Flor. Wigorn. 241. as far as they express themselves, imply the contrary.—Malmsb. says, the Mercian was at first graviter afflictus by the loss, but afterwards avenged himself, p. 27.—The expressions of Bede, that Wulfhere gave the Isle of Wight and a province in West Saxony to the king of Sussex in one part of his life, l. 4. c. 13. and that Cenwalch, during Wulfhere's life, was gravissimis regni sui damnis sæpissime ab hostibus adflictus, l. 3. c. 7. fully countenance

the idea, that if Cenwalch at first prevailed, the ultimate triumphs were enjoyed by Wulfhere.

¹⁸ Bede, l. 3. c. 21. Ib. c. 22. l. 4. c. 13.

¹⁹ Matt. West. p. 224, mentions the expulsion of Cenwalch. So Floren. Wig. p. 237.—In 648 the exiled monarch returned. Flor. W. 238.—In 661 Matt. West. places the 13th year of Aethelwald's reign in Sussex, p. 232.

²⁰ Bede, l. 4. c. 13. Sax. Chron. p. 39. The annotator on Bede remarks, that the memorial of this province remains still in the names of the hundreds of Meansbrough, Eastmean, Westmean, and Mansbridge, Smith's Bede, p. 155.

²¹ Bede, l. 3. c. 30.—Hugo Candidus names Sigher as the king of Sussex subdued by Wulfhere. Cœnob. Burg. Hist. p. 7 and 8.—This is a misnomer. Sigher reigned with Sebbi in Essex at this period. That Surrey was also in subjection to Wulfhere, appears from a charter in the register of Chertsey Abbey, in which Frithwald, the founder,

BOOK

II.

670.

Oswy's
death.

Oswy is ranked by Bede, the seventh, as Oswald had been the sixth, of the kings who preponderated in the Anglo-Saxon octarchy.²² He died in this year.²³ His greatest action was the deliverance of the Anglo-Saxons from the oppressions of Penda; he also subdued the Picts and Scots; but the fate of the amiable Oswin, whom he destroyed, shades his memory with a cloud.²⁴ Alfred, his eldest son, who had assisted to gain the laurels of his fame in the field of Winwid, was rejected from the succession, for his illegitimacy, and the younger Ecgfrid was placed over the united kingdoms of Northumbria.²⁵

672.

Saxburga.

On the death of Cenwalch, his widow, Saxburga, assumed the sceptre of Wessex. She wielded it with courage and intelligence; she augmented her army with new levies, and encouraged her veterans. The submissive were rewarded by her clemency; to the enemy a firm countenance was displayed;²⁶ but the proud barbarians of Wessex disdained even a government of wisdom in the form of a woman;²⁷ and for ten years the nobles shared the government. In the first part of this interval, Æscuin, son of Cenfusus, a prevailing noble, descended from Cerdic, is mentioned to have ruled.²⁸ He led

674.

Æscuin.

styles himself "*Provinciae Surrianorum subregulus regis Wlfarii Mercianorum.*" This was in 666. MSS. Cotton. Lib. Vitel. A. 13. This Frithwald is called King.

²² Bede, l. 2. c. 5. Sax. Chron. p. 7.

²³ Sax. Chron. 40. Chron. Abb. Petri de Burgo, p. 2.

²⁴ If Oswin's character has not been too favourably drawn, his death was a great loss to his contemporaries. His tall and handsome person was adorned by a disposition unfrequent in his age; affatu jucundus, moribus civilis, omnibus manu largus, regum humilimus, amabilis omnibus. Flor. Wig. 237. To the same purport Bede, l. 3. c. 14. and Matt. West. 224.

²⁵ Reprobato notho—factione optimatum quamquam senior. Malms. 20, 21.—Ecgfrid had resided as a hostage with the Mercian queen at the time of Penda's fall. Bede, 3. 24.

²⁶ Malmsb. 14. She reigned for one year. Sax. Chron. 41.

²⁷ "*Indignantibus regni magnatibus expulsa est a regno, nolentibus sub sexu fœmineo militare.*" Matt. West. 236.

²⁸ There is a seeming contradiction on this point between Bede and the Saxon Chronicle. Bede, l. 3. c. 12. says, that after Cenwalch's death, acceperunt subreguli regnum gentis, et divisum inter se tenuerunt annis circiter decem.—Flor. Wig. 246. mentions this passage, but mentions also the opposite account of the Anglica Chronica. The Saxon Chronicle, after Saxburga's year, places Æscuin in 674, and Kentwin in 676, both within the ten years of Bede, p. 41, 44. I cannot reject the evidence of Bede, who was born at this time. Perhaps Æscuin and Kentwin were the most powerful of the nobles, and being of the race of Cerdic, enjoyed the supremacy. Ina's charter authenticates Kentwin's reign.

a powerful force against Wulfhere, the king of Mercia; a battle, in which the mutual destruction was more conspicuous than the decision, ensued at Bedwin in Wilts. It is worth our while, says the moralizing historian, to observe how contemptible are the glorious wars and noble achievements of the great. Both these contending kings, whose vanity and pomp hurled thousands of their fellow creatures to their graves, scarcely survived the battle a year.²⁹ Within a few months Wulfhere died of a natural disease, and in 676 Æscuin followed. Kentwin is denominated his successor,³⁰ and Ethelred, the surviving son of Penda, acceded to the crown of Mercia, and ravaged Kent.³¹

CHAP.

V.

674.

Kentwin.

Ecgfrid, who was governing in Northumbria, had repulsed with great slaughter an invasion of the Picts. Their general, Bernhaeth, fell, and the corse of his followers stopped the current of the river which flowed near the scene of ruin.³² In 679 Ecgfrid invaded Mercia, though Ethelred had married his sister. On the Trent the shock of ambition took place; Ælfuin, the brother of the aggressor, fell. More calamitous warfare impended from the exasperation of the combatants, when the aged Theodore interposed. His function of archbishop derived new weight from his character, and he established a pacification between the related combatants. A pecuniary mulct compensated for the fate of Ælfuin, and the retaliation in human blood was prevented.³³

Ecgfrid of Northumbria.

After the death of Cadwallon, his son Cadwaladyr, discouraged by a pestilence and famine, which severely afflicted Wales, went to Bretagne, and was the last of the Cymry who pretended to the sovereignty of the Island.

See it in Malmsb. de Ant. Glast. 3 Gale, 311. Alfred, in his Chronological Fragment, inserted in his Bede, mentions both Æscuin and Kentwin. Walker's Elfred. Mag. App. p. 199.

²⁹ H. Hunting. p. 318. Sax. Chron. 45.

³⁰ Sax. Chron. 44. Ethelwerd, 837.

³¹ Sax. Chron. 44. The Chronicon of Peterborough dates the invasion of Kent in 677, p. 3.

³² Malmsb. Gest. Pontif. 1. 3. p. 261. Eddius fills two rivers with the bodies, over which the victors passed siccis pedibus. Vit. Wilf. c. 19. p. 61. ed. Gale.

³³ Bede, 1. 4. c. 21. Malmsb. 20, 28. Sax. Chron. 44. Ecgfrid had conquered Lincolnshire from Wulfhere before Ethelred's accession. Bede, 1. 2. c. 12.

BOOK
II.

When he died at Rome, Alan, the king of Bretagne, sent his son, Ivor, and his nephew, Inyr, with a powerful fleet, to regain the crown which Cadwaladyr had lost. Ivor was at first so successful, that he defeated the Saxons, and took
681. Cornwall, Devonshire, and Somersetshire. But Kentwin met him with the West Saxon power, and, chasing him to the sea, again disappointed the hopes of the Cymry.³⁴ Rodri Maelwynawc assumed the pennaduziaeth, the sovereignty of the Cymry, on Ivor's departure for Rome.³⁵

684. The restless Ecgfrid soon turned his arms upon Ireland. This nation, although by some of its tribes occasionally at variance with the Welsh, had always continued in strict amity with the English;³⁶ but this peaceful forbearance was no protection from the avarice of power. Their country was miserably ravaged by Beorht, the Northumbrian general; the lands of Bregh were plundered, and many churches and monasteries were destroyed. The islanders defended their domestic lares with valour, and the Angles retreated. In the next year the king invaded the Picts with the same purpose of depredation; but a feigned flight of the natives seduced him into a defile. At Drumnechtan the fierce assault of patriotism was made, and Ecgfrid perished with most of his troops.³⁷ The corpse of Ecgfrid was buried at Icolmkill, or the celebrated isle of St. Columba.

Perishes
against the
Picts.

This disastrous expedition humbled the power of Northumbria.³⁸ The Irish and Scotch disclaimed its predominance, and some of the Welsh princes obtained their independence. The sceptre, which in the hands of Ethelfrid, Edwin, and

³⁴ Brut y Saeson and the Brut y Tywysogion, p. 468—470. Sax. Chron. 45. Wynne's History of Wales is not a translation of Caradoc. It is composed from his work, with many additions, badly put together.

³⁵ Brut y Tywysog. p. 471.

³⁶ Bede characterizes the Irish as a people innoxiam et nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam, l. 4. c. 26.—Malmsbury describes them as a genus hominum innocens, genuina

simplicitate, nil unquam mali moliens, p. 20.

³⁷ Annals of Ulster, Johnstone's Celto Scandicæ, p. 59.—Bede, l. 4. c. 26.—Flaherty's Ogygia, 230.—Sim. Dun. 5.

³⁸ Thirteen years afterwards, Beorht, endeavouring to revenge the calamity by another invasion, also perished. Bede, 5. 24.—Ann. Ulst. 59. Sax. Chr. 49. Hunting. 337.

Oswy, had menaced the other kingdoms with subjection, was formidable no more. The thrones of Wessex and Mercia obscured it by their splendour, and it became at last the object of incessant usurpations.³⁹

CHAP.

V.

684.

Alfred was now admitted to the royal dignity. This worthy prince, the precursor of his great namesake, and perhaps the model which kindled the emulation and directed the pursuits of the son of Ethelwulf, had been educated by the celebrated Wilfrid.⁴⁰ He had governed Deira under his father Oswy, and had contributed to the defeat of Penda. He cultivated a friendship with Peada, and married his sister. By inspiring Peada with a respect for Christianity, he occasioned its establishment in Mercia.⁴¹

Alfred of Northumbria.

Rejected, by a faction of the great, from the crown of his father, he never raised the sword of military competition against his brother; nobler objects attracted and rewarded his intelligent moderation. He devoted himself to piety and literature, and voluntarily retired into Ireland, that he might pursue his unambitious studies.⁴² For fifteen years he enjoyed

³⁹ It is about this period, that the authentic chronicles of the Welsh begin. Four of them are printed in the Welsh Archæology, vol. 2. The Brut y Tywysogion begins with the year 680, and ends about 1280. p. 390—467. This is printed from the Red Book of Hergest. The Brut y Saeson, which is in the Cotton. Library, begins, after a short introduction, in 683; and in 1197. Another copy of the Brut y Tywysogion, printed from MSS. in Wales, begins 660, and ends 1196. Some extracts are also printed from another Chronicle, called from the name of a former transcriber, Brut Jeuan Brechfa, beginning 686. These last three Chronicles occupy from page 468 to p. 582. These Chronicles refer to Caradoc of Llancarvan, who lived in the twelfth century, as their author. As they contain facts and dates not always the same in all, it is not probable that Caradoc wrote them all. Their variations seem to have arisen from the imitations or additions of the ancient transcribers, who have brought them down below the times of

Caradoc. Their general character is that of plain simple Chronicles, in an humble artless style, but seldom correct in their chronology. They scarcely ever agree with the Saxon dates.

⁴⁰ Bede, l. 3. c. 25. He remunerated his preceptor by a bishopric, in the second year of his reign. Ib. l. 5. c. 19.—Eddius Vit. Wilf. c. 43.—The Saxon MS. in the Cotton. Library, Vesp. D. 14, p. 132. spells the name Alfred. Bede calls him Alfridus.

⁴¹ Bede, l. 3. c. 21. c. 24. He reigned under his father.—Eddius, c. 7. c. 10. So Bede implies, c. 25.

⁴² "In insulis Scotorum ob studium literarum exulabat—in regionibus Scotorum lectioni operam dabat—ipse ob amorem sapientiæ spontaneum passus exilium."—Bede Vita S. Cudberti, c. 24.—"In Hyberniam seu vi seu indignatione secesserat, ibi et ab odio germani tutus, et magno otio literis imbutus, omni philosophia composuerat animum." Malmsbury, 21.—Viro undecumque doctissimo. Bede Hist.

BOOK

II.

684.

Encourages
literature.

Ceadwalla.

a life of philosophic tranquillity and progressive improvement. The books revered by Christians engrossed so much of his studies, that one of the epithets applied to him was, "most learned in the Scriptures."⁴³

He exhibited to the world this example of contented privacy till the death of Ecgfrid raised him to the throne without a crime. He governed the kingdom with the same virtue with which he had resigned it; he derived his happiness from the peace and enjoyments of his people;⁴⁴ he encouraged literature, received the Asiatic travels of Arculfus, written by Adamnan, with kindness, liberally rewarded the author, and by his bounty caused the composition to be imparted to others.⁴⁵ Northumbria was blessed with his superintendence for nineteen years.

In the year of Ecgfrid's destruction, Ceadwalla began to contend for the throne of Wessex; he was descended from Cerdic, through Cealwin and his son Cutha.⁴⁶ His youth was of great promise, and he suffered no opportunity of exerting his warlike talents to occur unimproved. Banished from his country by the factious chiefs who governed it, he was assiduous to assemble from it a military force, and he succeeded in drawing the youth of Wessex to his standard.⁴⁷ In Selsey he

l. 5. c. 12.—Rex sapientissimus. Eddius Vit. Wilf. c. 43.—The wise king of the Saxons. Annals Ulster, p. 60.

⁴³ Bede, Hist. Abbat. Wiremuth. p. 300.—Alcuin describes him thus: Qui sacris fuerat studiis imbutus ab annis ætatis primæ, valido sermone sophista acer et ingenio, idem rex simul atque magister. De Pont. 718.

⁴⁴ "Per decem et novem annos summa pace et gaudio provinciæ præfuit: nihil unquam præter in persecutione magni Wilfridi quod livor edax digne carpere posset admittens." Malmsb. 21. Alcuin, p. 722.

⁴⁵ Bede, l. 5. c. 15. Bede calls the book De locis sanctis multis utilissimum. Arculfus surveyed Jerusalem, Palestine, Damascus, Constantinople, Alexandria, and the Archipelago. Returning home he was driven by

a tempest on Britain; Adamnan received him, listened eagerly to his conversations, and immediately committed them to writing. Bede, ib.—This work of Adamnan is apud Mabillon, Act. Ben. Sac. 3. part 2. p. 502. Smith's notes on Bede, 200.—There is a tract of Bede, De locis sanctis, taken from this of Adamnan, printed p. 315 of Smith's edition.—The famous Aldhelm addressed to Alfred one of his compositions, whose subjects are mentioned by Malmsbury, de Pontif. l. 5. p. 342. Gale.

⁴⁶ Sax. Chron. 45. Malmsbury, in his Life of Aldhelm, p. 11. Wharton's Ang. Sac. 2. or 3 Gale, 346. says, that Kentwin, morbo et senio gravis, appointed Cadwalla his successor; but as Kentwin only reigned nine years, the addition of senio gravis can hardly be correct.

⁴⁷ Malmsbury, p. 14.

obtained money and horses from Wilfrid, the bishop,⁴⁸ and directed his first onset on the king of Sussex, whom he surprised and destroyed, and whose kingdom he desolated. The royal generals, who had been warring in Kent, returned, and expelled the invader,⁴⁹ who profited by his expulsion to secure to himself the crown of Wessex. This accession of strength he wielded triumphantly against Sussex, which lost its defenders, and yielded to the fortune of his arms.⁵⁰ Ceadwalla also captured the Isle of Wight; but stained his prosperity with cruelty.⁵¹

For two years, Ceadwalla and his brother Mollo plundered Kent, which had been harassed by Sussex, and weakened by incapable rulers.⁵² The natives viewed the spoilers for some time with fruitless indignation. Town after town was ravaged. Rousing themselves at last, the men of Kent collected into a competent body, and attacked him with auspicious valour. Mollo, with twelve soldiers, was surprized in a cottage. The injured natives brutally surrounded them with flames, and they were reduced to ashes.⁵³

686.

Mollo's catastrophe.

In obeying the impulse of a headlong wrath, the Kentish men forgot that cruelty makes even the injured odious, and justifies punishment; it much oftener stimulates revenge than deters it. The brother of Mollo was on the throne of Wessex, and in the following year spread a torrent of vindictive calamities through Kent, which it mourned in all its districts.⁵⁴ Ceadwalla travelled to Rome, where he was baptized by the pope, and died in his youth in the following week.⁵⁵

Ceadwalla's death.

⁴⁸ Malmsb. de Gest. Pontif. l. 3. p. 265.

⁴⁹ Bede, l. 4. c. 15. Flor. Wig. 255.

⁵⁰ Bede, ib. Flor. Wig. 255. Langhorn Chron. 241, 242. Sussex is said by Bede to have contained the land of 7000 families, l. 4. c. 13.

⁵¹ During this conquest he formed the inhuman project of destroying its inhabitants, and of re-peopling it from his own province. Bede, l. 4. c. 15.

⁵² Hunting. l. 4. p. 335. Malmsbury men-

tions the civil wars, which also afflicted Kent, l. 1. p. 11.—In the preceding year, pestilentia depopulata est Britannia. Chron. Petri de Burgo, p. 4.

⁵³ Malmsbury, p. 11. Sax. Chron. p. 46.—Huntingdon, p. 336.—W. Thorn, in his Chronica, places the catastrophe at Canterbury, p. 1770. x Script.

⁵⁴ Sax. Chron. 46. Hunting. 336.

⁵⁵ Sax Chron. 46.—Bede, l. 5. c. 7. gives the poetical epitaph engraven on the tomb

Ina succeeded him in Wessex. He was the son of Cenred, who was the nephew of Cynegils.⁵⁶ His father was living at the period of his accession.

The Saxon octarchy, amidst all its vicissitudes, presented in one province or the other an uninterrupted succession of great men. From Hengist to Egbert, talents were never wanting on some of the Anglo-Saxon thrones. The direction of the royal capacity varied; in some kings valour, in others military conduct; in some piety, in some learning, in some legislative wisdom, predominated. The result was, that the Anglo-Saxons, though fluctuating in the prosperity of their several districts, yet, considered as a nation, went on rapidly improving in civilization and power.

Much of the fame of Ina has been gained by his legislation. He published a collection of laws, which yet remain,⁵⁷ and he deserves the gratitude of mankind in common with every other law-giver. Whoever applies himself to mark the useful limits of human action, to set boundaries to individual selfishness, to establish the provisions of justice in defence of the weak or injured, and to rescue the criminal from punishments of caprice or favour, is a character intitled to the veneration of mankind. A declamation against laws is a satire upon wisdom, the most benevolent. Laws must partake of the ignorance and spirit of the age which gave them birth. An Ina must legislate as an Ina, and for the people of an Ina. If the subsequent improvements of mankind discover that prior regulations have been defective, succeeding legislators will correct those provisions, which the progress of society has made obsolete or improper. What they may devise, their posterity, who will have changed into new beings, may mould into a fitter correspondence with their own necessities; but to

of this short-lived conqueror. The Vita St. Vulmari mentions that Ceadwalla, on his journey to Rome, heard of Vulmar's piety, the abbot of Samur; visited him, and left thirty pieces of money to adorn his church. 3. Bouquet's Recueil, p. 626.

⁵⁶ Sax. Chron. 47. Bede, 5. 7.

⁵⁷ Wilkins's Leges Saxonicae, p. 14—27. The first paragraph of these announces his father Cenred as one of the counsellors by whose advice he promulgated them.

abolish all laws, because laws are not all perfect, would be to unchain the tiger passions of mankind, and to convert society into an African desert, or a Cytherean brothel.

The wrath of the West Saxons for the fate of Mollo had not relented. With inhumanity, as great as that which they professed to chastise, they continued to desolate Kent. At length, their hostilities were appeased by the homicidal mulct of thirty thousand marks of gold.⁵⁸ Wihtred, from the line of Ethelbert, had obtained the crown of Kent, and terminated the miseries which the people had suffered from the invasion and a turbulent inter-regnum.⁵⁹

The Mercian nobility displayed the ferocity of the age, in destroying Ostrida, the wife of Ethelred, their reigning king.⁶⁰ The cause of her fate is not known. The reason adduced by Langhorn,⁶¹ that her sister had murdered Peada, is unlikely, because this event had occurred near forty years before. Ethelred left the throne, to become monk and abbot of Bardney;⁶² he was succeeded by his nephew, Cenred.⁶³

In Northumbria, Alfred was succeeded by his son Osred, a child of eight years.⁶⁴ A rebel, Edulf, usurped the sceptre, and besieged the royal infant and his guardian, Berthfrid, in Bebbanburgh, the metropolis of this northern kingdom.⁶⁵ The nobles and people armed in defence of Osred, and before the usurper had enjoyed his dignity above two months he was destroyed.

Cenred of Mercia, and Offa of Essex, went to Rome, and

694.
Kent de-
vastated.

697.
Mercians
destroy their
queen.

704.

705.
Successors
of Alfred.

709.

⁵⁸ Sax. Chron. 47, 48. Malmsbury, 14.—Others make the payment smaller, as Polychronicon, p. 243, 3000 pounds.—Flor. Wig. p. 260, 3750. Wihtred, unable to resist Ina, proposed the expiatory fine. Huntingd. 337.

⁵⁹ Sax. Chron. 48. Huntingd. 337.

⁶⁰ Bede, 5. c. ult. Sax. Chron. 49. Flor. Wig. 260. Matt. West. 250.—She was sister to Egfrid, and daughter of Oswy.—I observe her name signed to a charter of Peterborough monastery in 680. 1 Dugd. Monast. 67. Ego Ostrich regina Ethelredi.

⁶¹ Chron. Reg. Angl. p. 256.

⁶² In this capacity he died in 716. Chron. Petri de Burgo, 6.

⁶³ Malmsbury, 28.

⁶⁴ Bede, l. 5. c. 18.

⁶⁵ Malmsb. de Pontif. l. 3. p. 268. Eddius Vit. Wilf. c. 57. p. 85.—Hoveden describes Bebbanburgh to have been a city *munificissima non admodum magna, sed quasi duorum vel trium agrorum spatium, habens unum introitum cavatum, et gradibus miro modo exaltatum*. On the top of the mountain was the church. Annal. pars prior, 403. The city was built by Ida.

BOOK
II.

709.

assumed the monastic profession.⁶⁶ In the next year, Berthfrid, the protecting præfect of Northumbria, defeated the Picts between Hæfe and Cære, in the field of Manan. Finguin Mc Delaroith perished in the battle.⁶⁷ It is not stated who commanded the Picts, but Nectan, or Naiton, was king of the Picts at this period.⁶⁸

710.

Ina defeats
Geraint,

Ina continued to reign prosperously. He waged war with Geraint, the British king of Cornwall. Amid the first charges, Higbald, a Saxon leader, fell; but at last the Britons fled.⁶⁹

715.

and Ceolred.

Ina also prosecuted a war with Ceolred, who had succeeded his cousin Cenred in Mercia. At Wodnesbury they met; the slaughter of the battle was great; the event was no advantage to either.⁷⁰

716.

Ceolred, king of Mercia,⁷¹ was succeeded by Ethelbald, who possessed the crown for forty-one years. In this year Osred of Northumbria, the eldest son of Alfred, was destroyed at the lake of Windamere by his revolting kinsmen,⁷² one of whom, Coenred, the son of Cuthwin, succeeded;⁷³ but he fell

⁶⁶ Bede, 5. 19. He describes Offa as a most amiable youth, whom pure devotion induced to abdicate his power. A more enlightened virtue would have counselled him to have kept, for the benefit of his subjects, the dignity he was so worthy to possess. Huntingdon observes, that the example of these two kings produced many thousands of imitators, p. 337.

⁶⁷ Sax. Chron. 50. Flor. Wig. 264. Bede, 5. 24. dates it 711. Gibson, in his Appendix to the Chronicle, conjectures that Hæfe and Cære were Carehouse and Heefeld, a little beyond the wall, p. 18. "710. Slaughter of the Picts in the field of Manan, among the Saxons, where Finguin Mc Delaroith perished." Annals of Ulster, p. 60.

⁶⁸ Nectan, in the Annals of Ulster, p. 60. —In 716 he drove the family of Iona beyond Drum-albin. Ib. p. 60. —In 725 he was put in chains by king Drust. Ib. p. 61. —Bede, l. 5. c. 21. calls him Naiton, and mentions his changing the time of Easter to the Roman period, which the Annals of Ulster place in 715. p. 60.

⁶⁹ Sax. Chron. 50. Hunting. 337. Flor. Wig. 264. This Geraint was the third of that name in Cornwall. Owen's Llywarch, p. 3. Aldhelm addressed to him a letter on the British celebration of Easter, which is among the epistles of Boniface. Biblioth. Magna Pat. v. 16. p. 65. ep. 44. In this he styles Geraint, domino gloriosissimo occidentalis regni sceptrā gubernanti, Geruntio regi.

⁷⁰ Sax. Chr. 50. Hunt. 338.

⁷¹ Unless we interpret the account, given by Boniface, of Ceolred's dying conversation with the devil, who came for him in the middle of a feast, (Malmsb. 28.) as a sudden incidence of insanity, the missionary of Germany is at variance with Huntingdon, who says of Ceolred, that patriæ et avitæ virtutis hæres clarissime rexit, p. 337.

⁷² Malmsb. 21. Huntingd. 338. Bede, 5. 24. Sax. Chron. 51. Osred has received the lash of Boniface. Malmsb. 28. —Malmsbury complains of him, p. 21.

⁷³ Bede, 5. 22. Flor. Wig. 266.

from the agitated throne two years afterwards, and Osric, another son of the learned Alfred, took his place.⁷⁴

In 718 Inigils, the brother of Ina, died. Though no achievement of greatness is attached to his name in history, yet the events of the future time have given it importance. He was the ancestor from whom Egbert and Alfred, and the following Saxon monarchs of England, deduced their descent.⁷⁵

Inigils, the
ancestor of
Egbert.

Ina rebuilt the abbey of Glastonbury at the request of Aldhelm. It had been utterly destroyed, but he erected it with magnificence, and it lasted until the Danish ravages.⁷⁶ The insurrection of pretenders disturbed the close of Ina's reign: but he attacked and destroyed Cynewulf Ætheling; and in the next year his queen besieged another, Ealdbryht, in Taunton, a castle which the king had built to defend that part of his dominions, and in which the rebel had taken his post of enmity. She levelled it to the ground, and Ealdbryht withdrew into Sussex. Ina directed his forces against this province, and in three years afterwards he removed his competitor.⁷⁷

Ina builds
Glastonbury
Abbey.

721.

After a fortunate reign of thirty-seven years, the king laid down his dignity. His queen had long counselled the voluntary humiliation, but the charms of habitual power for some time defeated her eloquence. Travelling with the king one day after a splendid feast, Ethelburga invented pretences to return. Ina obliged her, but was amazed to find his festive hall polluted with filth and rubbish, and a swinish litter on the couch of his repose. Turning to his queen for an explanation of the phenomenon which her orders had produced, she exclaimed, "Where is the merriment, the splendor, the

His queen
advises his
abdication.

⁷⁴ Bede, 5. 23. Simeon Dunel. p. 7. The expressions of Malmsbury imply that Osric assisted to procure his brother Osred's death; he says of Kenred and Osric, domini sui occisi sanguinem luentes fædo exitu auras polluere, p. 21.

⁷⁵ Sax. Chron. 51. Asser. p. 3. Abb. Rieval, 350.

⁷⁶ Bromton, p. 758. He founded the great church of Glastenbury pro anima propinqui ejus Mollonis. See his charters to it. 1 Dugdale Monast. 12, 13. Malmsb. de Ant. Glast. 3 Gale, 309. 311. His other gifts to it were magnificent.

⁷⁷ Sax. Chron. 52. Hunt. 338. Flor. Wig. 268.

BOOK
II.

721.

“luxury, the flattery of yesterday? Are they not like vapours,
“and as transient as the wind? As transitory are we who
“enjoy them. Are we not like a river hurrying to the dark
“ocean of illimitable time? Behold the disgusting spectacle
“of the dissolving viands. In their loathsome relics we may
“perceive what our pampered bodies will become. Let us
“then direct our pursuits to objects more suitable to the
“condition we approach.”⁷⁸

Ina goes to
Rome.

The singularity of the incident had full impression on the mind of Ina; he resigned his crown to his kinsman, and travelled to Rome.⁷⁹ He founded there a Saxon school, for the instruction of his countrymen who chose to be educated at Rome, and he added a church for their service, and the convenience of their burial. To support this, and to provide a subsistence for the English who should dwell there, he imposed the payment of a penny on every family, which was denominated Romescot. It was sent to the papal see.⁸⁰ Ina expired at Rome.

731.

The Anglo-
Saxon kings
at this period.

716-756.

The mutations of the octarchy for the last century had been generally from an heptarchy to an hexarchy; at the period of Ina's death it was an hexarchy, because Wessex had absorbed Sussex, and Deira and Bernicia were amalgamated into Northumbria. This restless province was then governed by Osric, who left the kingdom to Ceolwulf, the brother of Cenred, whom he had destroyed.⁸¹ In Mercia, Ethelbald, a descendant of Wybba, reigned.⁸² In Essex, which was be-

⁷⁸ Malmsbury, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Bede, 5. c. 7. Sax. Chron. 52. Flor. Wig. 269. M. West. 265. Bede says of Ina's journey, that it was what in these times plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles, ignobiles, laici, clerici, viri ac feminae, certatim facere consueverunt.—At Rome, clothed in a plebeian garment, he lived in privacy till his death, labore manuum. Dugd. Monast. 1. p. 14. 32. Malmsb. 3 Gale, 313.

⁸⁰ Matt. West. 265.

⁸¹ Flor. Wig. 269. Malmsb. 21. Bede addressed his history to Ceolwulf, the beginning of whose reign was tempestuous.

Bede in his dedication mentions that it was a favourite employment of this prince to study the actions and opinions of former men, and especially of those who had given lustre to the Anglo-Saxon name. He submitted to the tonsure in 737, and Eadbert succeeded. Smith's Bede, p. 224. Ceolwulf was descended from Osga, one of the sons of Ida. Sim. Dun. p. 7. Bede in one line expresses the vicissitudes of Ceolwulf, and the state of the country, captus et adtonsus et remissus in regnum, l. 5. c. ult.

⁸² Sax. Chron. 51. 59. Bede, l. 5. c. 24. He was the son of Alwion. Ing. 33.

coming fast the satellite of Mercia, Suedbred had governed alone since his brother Offa went to Rome.⁸³ In Kent, Eadbert had ascended the throne of Wihtred, whose laws remain to us.⁸⁴ In East Anglia, Aldulphus was succeeded by Selred; on his death, Alphuald, for a short time, inherited the sceptre.⁸⁵

CHAP.

V.

725.

747.

⁸³ By mistake, Langhorn, 281. and Rapin, place Selred on the throne of Essex. Malmsb. 35. Flor. Wig. 273. and Al. Beverl. 85. led them into the error. We learn from Huntingdon that Selred was king of East Anglia, p. 339. whom the Chronicle of Mailros supports. Suebricht or Sueabred was king of Essex, and died 738. Mailros, p. 136. Sim. Dunelm. 100. A charta of his, dated 704, is in Smith's Appendix to Bede, p. 749. In another he signs with Sebbi and Sighear, ib. p. 748. Swithred reigned in Essex 758, Sim. Dun. 275.

⁸⁴ After a reign of thirty-four years and a half, Wihtred died in 725, and left Edilbert, Eadbert, and Alric, his heirs. Bede, 5. c. 23. Eadbert reigned until 748. Sax. Chron. 56, or 749. Mailros. p. 137. Ethel-

bert until 760. Sax. Chron. 60. when the surviving brother, Alric, succeeded, Malmsbury, p. 11.

⁸⁵ In the synod at Hatfield in 680, Aldulph was present. This was the seventeenth year of his reign. Bede, l. 4. c. 17. and the Ely history, MSS. Cott. Nero, A. 15. states Aldulph to have been reigning in 679. The Chronicle of Mailros accurately places Selred after him, who died 747. 1 Gale Script. 137. Alphuald, the successor of Selred, died 749, ib. Humbean and Albert divided the kingdom afterwards, ib. Sim. Dun. 103. M. West. names them Beorna and Ethelbert, p. 273. Bromton, p. 749. Florence Wig. places Beorn in 758, p. 275. I hope these few last notes correctly state a very troublesome chronology.

CHAP. VI.

The History of the Octarchy, from the Death of Ina to the Accession of Egbert, in the Year 800.

BOOK
II.

728.

Æthelheard
in Wessex.

ÆTHELHEARD, the kinsman of Ina, and a descendant of Cerdic, obtained the crown of West Saxony.¹ Oswald, also sprung from the founder of Wessex, at first opposed his pretensions, but discovering the inferiority of his forces, he abandoned the contest.² The king devastated Devonshire, and was extending the ravages into Cornwall, when the Britons, under Rodri Malwynawc, vanquished him at Heilyn, in Cornwall. At Garth Maelawch, in North Wales, and at Pencoet in Glamorganshire, the Cymry also triumphed.³

Ethelbald
in Mercia.

The king of Mercia at this period, Ethelbald, was a man of elegant stature, a powerful frame, a warlike and imperious spirit; persecuted in his youth by the king he had succeeded, and to whom he had been dangerous, he owed his safety to the secrecy of his retreat. Here the pious Guthlac endeavoured to moralize his mind, and, in gratitude to the friend

¹ Sax. Chron. 52. Flor. Wig. 269. Ran. Higd. Chron. Petri de Burgo, p. 6. gives this date, which Ethelwerd, p. 837, also sanctions. Mat. West. p. 266, has 727, yet the expressions of Bede, a contemporary, imply the year 725. Smith's ed. p. 188, note.—A passage of Malmsbury, in his Antiq. Glast. Eccles. p. 312, promises to reconcile the contradictions. It states that Ina went twice to Rome. "Eodem anno quo idem rex Romam personaliter adiit, privilegium apostolico signaculo corroboratum in redeundo Glastoniam apportavit. Et postea iterum cum Ethelburga regina sua, instinctu ejusdem, Romam abiit."—Bede

may have dated his first peregrination; the others his last.

² Huntingd. 338. In the charter of Ina, transcribed by Malmsbury, Antiq. Glast. p. 312, Ethelard signs frater reginæ.—Oswald was the son of Ethelbald, of the race of Cerdic, through Cealwin and Cuthwin. Flor. Wig. 269. Sax. Chron. 53. The plural expression of Bede, taken in its natural force, seems to express that Ina left his crown to Oswald, as well as Ethelard, "ipse relicto regno ac juvenioribus commendato." l. 5. c. 7.

³ Brut y Saeson, and Brut y Tywysogion, 471, 472.

of his adversity, Ethelbald constructed the monastery of Croyland over his tomb.* To annex the pleasant region between the Severn and the Wye to his Mercian territories, he entered Wales with a powerful army. At Carno, a mountain in Monmouthshire, the Britons checked his progress in a severe battle, and drove him over the Wye with great loss.† Æthelheard dying, Cuthred his relation succeeded him in Wessex.‡

CHAP.
VI.

Wars with
the Welsh.

741.

In the third year of his reign, Cuthred was in arms against the Britons, with Ethelbald assisting him. The great superiority of the Saxon forces obtained a decisive victory at Ddefawdan. After much plunder, the victors retired.‡

743.

Cuthred de-
feats them.

Cuthred lost his son Cynric in a military sedition.§ Two years afterwards, he suppressed a dangerous rebellion of Edelhun, one of his chieftains.¶

748.

Suppresses a
rebellion.

The thrones of Mercia and Wessex being occupied by two princes of high spirit and ambitious schemes, the discord, which had been long augmenting, at last burst into warlike competition. Cuthred presumed his power to be equal to the struggle, and he disclaimed the intolerable exactions of Ethelbald. At Burford in Oxfordshire, the rival princes met. Cuthred was assisted by the brave Edelhun, now a willing subject; and Ethelbald displayed the forces of Kent, East Anglia, and Essex, in joint array with his Mercians. Edelhun, advancing beyond his line, rent the golden dragon,‡ the

War between
Cuthred and
Ethelbald.

752.

* Ingulf. p. 2—4. To sustain the stony mass an immense quantity of wooden piles was driven into the marsh; and hard earth was brought in boats nine miles, to assist in making the foundation.

† Brut y Tywysogion, p. 472.

‡ Saxon Chron. 55. The Chronicle of Mailros, a document valuable for its general accuracy, countenances Bede's date of Æthelheard's reign; it says, that in 740, after a reign of fourteen years, he died. 1 Gale's Rer. Angl. Script. p. 136.

§ Brut y Tywysogion, p. 472. Flor. Wig.

272. Sax. Chron. 55. Mailros, p. 136. and Matt. West. 271. date the event in 744.

¶ Sax. Chron. 55. Mailros, 137. Huntingdon, 341. His expression, that Ethelbald afflixit eum nunc seditionibus nunc bellis, implies, that the insurrection was fostered by Mercia.

‡ Hunt. 341. Sax. Chron. 56. Flor. Wig. 273. The extraordinary valour of Edelhun would have conquered the superior numbers of the king, if in the hour of victory a wound had not disabled him.

§ See Witt. 6.

BOOK
II.

752.

splendid banner of Mercia, and, animated by his intrepidity, the West Saxons poured the shout of battle, and rushed to the charge. A conflict terrible to both armies succeeded; the weapons mingled with incessant ruin, and death was glutted with innumerable victims; each party seemed to have forsworn retreat, and to have resolved on victory. Ambition inflamed the friends of Mercia. The horrors of subjection made Wessex desperate. Slaughter followed the sword of Edelhun, and Ethelbald raged like a resistless fire. Their mutual fury brought the general and the king into personal collision; their angry swords flew on each other with an impatience of revenge; every blow menaced destruction: but the king of Mercia at last discerned the superiority of his antagonist, and preferring safety to glory, he gave to his yet struggling army the first example of a hasty flight.¹¹

753.

Cuthred
attacks the
Welsh.Sigebyrht
succeeds.

The event of this conflict rescued Wessex from the yoke of Mercia, and established the foundation of that predominance which was afterwards improved into the conquest of the island. Cuthred again assailed with success the country of the Welsh.¹²

Is deposed,
and Cynewulf
chosen.

In 754, Cuthred died, and Sigebyrht succeeded;¹³ his reign was short, arrogant, and tyrannical; he perverted the laws to his convenience, or presumptuously violated them. When Cumbra, the noblest of his earls, obeyed the solicitations of the people, and intimated their complaints to the king, he was arbitrarily put to death, and the grievances were multiplied. The nobles and the people assembled; after a careful deliberation, Sigebyrht was deposed from his authority by an unanimous decision, and Cynewulf, a youth of the royal blood, was elected in his place. Deserted by all, the deposed

¹¹ Sax. Chron. 56. Flor. Wig. 273. Mailros dates it, as it does the events of this period, a year later, p. 137. Huntingdon has preserved the circumstances of the battle, p. 341.

¹² Sax. Chron. 56. Mailros, 137. The

British Chronicles state a battle at Henford about this time in South Wales, where the Cymry triumphed. Brut y Tywys. 473.

¹³ Flor. Wig. 273. Sax. Chron. 56. Cant-wara-burh, Canterbury, was burnt this year.

king fled into the wood of Anderida; a swineherd of the murdered Cumbra discovered him in his hiding place, and immediately slew him.¹⁴

The long reign of Ethelbald, whose power had overwhelmed, at one period, all the other Anglo-Saxon states,¹⁵ terminated in calamity. His defeat by Wessex was never retrieved, and he at last perished by civil insurrection. At Seggeswold the fatal battle ensued, for which he was not prepared, and Bernred, who headed the rebellion, attempted to invest himself with the robes of royalty; but the nomination of Ethelbald was supported by the nobles of Mercia, and the celebrated Offa, descended from Eoppa, the brother of Penda, was placed upon the throne.¹⁶ Bernred did not survive the year.¹⁷

755.
Ethelbald
perishes.

Offa made
king.

We may pause a moment, to cast a rapid glance on Northumbria. Ceolwulf, the patron of Bede, had acceded to the united kingdoms; but so perilous was the regal dignity in this perturbed kingdom, that its charms were, in this king's estimation, out-balanced by the incessant alarms of impending treason. He voluntarily abandoned the disquieting crown, and sought the tranquillity of the cloister.¹⁸

The revolu-
tions of
Northum-
bria.

731.

737.

¹⁴ Hunt. 341. 342. Malmsb. 15. Mailros, 137. Ethelwerd names the place of his death Pryfetesfleodan, p. 838.

¹⁵ Hunt. l. 4. p. 339. Maxima virtute super reges coætaneos profectus, omnes provincias Angliæ usque ad Humbram flumen cum suis regibus sibi subjectas esse voluit et fecit. In 737 he invaded Northumbria, and overpowered its resistance. Ib. p. 340. Sax. Chr. 54.

¹⁶ Ingulf, p. 5. Mailros, 137. Matt. West. p. 274, apparently misconceiving a passage of Huntingdon, p. 341. erroneously makes Ethelbald to have fallen against Cuthred, whom he represents to have survived him. The monk of Croyland enables us to rectify the mistake, and is supported by Malmsb. 28. and by the Sax. Chron. p. 56. and Flor. Wig. p. 273, who place the decease of Cuthred a year before Ethelbald's. Bede implies, that Ethelbald perished by assassination, l. 5. c. ult.

¹⁷ That Bernred died this year, has been

disputed. Malmsbury, p. 28. Alur. Beverl. 87. Ingulf. 5. the biographer of Offa, p. 11. Flor. Wig. 274. Ethelward, 839. affirm or imply it. On the other hand, Matt. West. p. 274. Sax. Chron. 59. Bromton, 776. and some others, state Bernred's expulsion only; and Matt. West. 277. makes him to perish by fire in the year 769, after having burnt the town of Catterick. But the Chronicle of Mailros, which, p. 138. mentions Beornred's attempt on the Mercian crown, calls the incendiary of Catterick, Earnredus, p. 139. Hence it is not certain that they were the same persons, and if not, the aufugavit of the one side is not sufficiently explicit to disprove the death stated on the other.

¹⁸ Huntingdon, p. 340, paints strongly the apprehensions of Ceolwulf: "Ipse horribilibus curis necis, et prodicionis, et multimodæ calamitatis, intus cruciebatur, et animo et corpore decoquebatur." Bede remarks, that an excessive drought destroyed the fertility of this year, l. 5. c. ult.

BOOK
II.

- Eadbert succeeded. His kingdom, left unprotected by his march against the Picts, suffered from an invasion of the Mercian Ethelbald; but he afterwards enlarged his dominions,¹⁹ and had the ability to maintain himself in his crown for twenty-one years; but when he also assumed the religious life,²⁰ the furies of civil murder again broke loose. In the first year of his accession, his son Osulf perished from domestic treachery, and Moll Edelwold ventured to accept the crown.²¹ In his third year, his life and honours were fiercely assaulted by one of his leaders, Oswin, whom he slew at Edwinescliffe. At no long interval afterwards the tomb received him, and
757. Alred, of the race of Ida,²² was elevated to the crown. After
765. a few years he was driven out, and Ethelred, the son of Moll,
774. was chosen in his stead.²³ In his third year, this king fraudulently procured the death of two of his generals by the instrumentality of two others. In the very next year, these men rebelled against himself, destroyed in two successive attacks others of his commanders, and expelled him from his kingdom.²⁴ Alfwold obtained it; but such was the spirit of the
779. country, that in the following year two chieftains raised an army, seized the king's ealdorman, Beorn, and his justiciary, and burnt them to ashes, because, in the estimation of the rebels, their administration of justice had been too severe.²⁵
788. Alfwold, to whom a chronicle applies the epithet, *rex innocentium*, was treacherously killed by his patrician, Sigan; and

¹⁹ Hunt. p. 340. Sax. Chron. p. 54. Bede, l. 5. c. ult. Sim. Dun. 11.

²⁰ Hunt. 342. Sax. Chron. 59. Chron. Petrib. 8. He was the eighth king in England, who within fifty years had relinquished the crown for the cowl. Huntingdon ascribes Eadbert's retreat to the impression made upon his mind by the violent deaths of Ethelbald and Sigebert, contrasted with the peaceful exit of Ceolwulf.

²¹ Bede says he was a *sua plebe electus*; and adds, that in his second year a great mortality took place, and lasted for two years. The dysentery was the principal malady, l. 5. c. ult.

²² By his son Edric, Sim. Dun. 11. Two letters of Alred to Lullus, a French bishop, are extant, Mag. Bibl. 16. 88. and apud Du Chesne, Hist. Franc. v. 2. p. 854. In the one he desires the bishop's assistance in establishing an amity with Charlemagne; the other is a letter of civility from Alred and his queen, Osgeotha, to Lullus, congratulating him on his arrival from a long journey.

²³ Chr. Mailros, 137. 138. Hunt. 342. Sax. Chron. 60. 61. Matt. West. 276. 278.

²⁴ Mailros, 138.

²⁵ Mailros, 139. Hunt. 343. Sax. Ch. 62.

Osred, his kinsman, son of Alred, acceded. In the next year he was betrayed and driven out, and Ethelred, the son of Moll, was recalled.²⁶ But as adversity, though it corrects many dispositions into virtue, yet sometimes only exasperates the stubborn, so it appears to have rather increased than diminished the obduracy of Ethelred. In the year of his restoration, he left Eardulf weltering in his blood at the gate of a monastery; and in the following year he dragged Elf and Elwin, the children of Alfwold, from York, and slew them. Osred, who had been deposed, attempted to recover the crown; his army deserted him, he fell into the hands of Ethelred, and perished. This prince now endeavoured, by a marriage with the daughter of Offa, to secure his authority, and for this purpose he repudiated his previous wife. But his policy and his murders were equally vain. Whoever, by an example of cruelty, lessens the public horror at deeds of blood, diminishes his own safety, and gives popularity to his own assassination. In the fourth year of Ethelred's restoration, his subjects, whom he had assisted to brutalize, destroyed him, and set up Osbald. After a reign of twenty-seven days, they deposed Osbald, and he obtained security in the cloister.²⁷ Eardulf, who had been recovered from his assassination by the charity of the monks, who found him apparently lifeless near their cloister, had fled to Charlemagne, and visited Rome. The emperor of the West, in conjunction with the papal legate, assisted him in his efforts to regain his kingdom: and he was crowned in 794. Before four years elapsed, they who had murdered Ethelred, revolted from Eardulf; and under their leader, Wada, endeavoured to destroy him. The sword

CHAP.

VI.

788.

792.

²⁶ Mailros, 139. Hunt. 343. Chron. Pet. 10. Rich. Hag. 298. Saxon Chron. 64. Osred took refuge in the Isle of Man; Sim. Dun. 12. Alcuin addressed to Ethelred, or, as he spells the name, Edelred, a letter of strong moral exhortation, which is still in existence. He reminds him how many of his predecessors had perished, propter injus-

titias et rapinas et immunditias vitæ. He intreats his people to be at peace between themselves, and to be faithful to their Lord, that, by their concord, the kingdom might be extended, quod sæpe per discordiam minui solebat. Alcuini opera, p. 1537. ed. Paris 1617.

²⁷ Mailros, 139.

of the king prevailed, and the rebels fled.²⁸ Here for a while we will quit this region of civil discord. Happy is the country in which the regal office is not elective, nor the right of succession permitted to be questionable! An hereditary monarchy, though, like all human institutions, it has its inconveniencies, yet has not been the contrivance of childish thinkers or half-way politicians; it was the benevolent invention of human wisdom, profiting from the most disastrous experience. No contests have been more baneful to human life and happiness, than those which have sprung from the uncertain right of accession, and from the practicability of attaining power by violence. It was a noble effort of advancing civilization, which strove to annihilate the evil, by accustoming mankind to revere as sacred the laws of hereditary succession. This habit blights ambition in the bud, and prevents the implacable passions of civil fury from kindling into life.

Traditions
concerning
Offa and
his queen.

Offa, who had obtained with violence the throne of Mercia,²⁹ displayed talents, and enjoyed a prosperity, which have made his name illustrious. His youth has been fabulously represented as distinguished by a wonderful transformation, from a miserable child, afflicted with imperfections in his speech, and the most important senses of the intellect, the sight and hearing, into an elegant frame, adorned with every human accomplishment.³⁰ His monastic panegyrist has also be-

²⁸ Ann. Franc. ap. Du Chesne, v. 2. p. 45. Mailros, 140. Huntingdon might well say, "Gens Anglorum naturaliter dura est et superba, et ideo bellis intestinis incessanter attrita." Alcuin displays the angry feelings of Charlemagne at this repetition of ferocity in Northumbria; he styled them a nation perfidam et perversam, pejorem paganis. Malmsb. 26.

²⁹ Bede's expression, concerning the accession of Offa, is, that having driven out Beonred, he sought the kingdom with a blood-stained sword, l. 5. c. ult. An epithet so marking, as sanguinolento, from a contemporary, implies that Offa's reign commenced with human slaughter.

³⁰ Vita Offæ secundi, added to Watts's edition of Matthew Paris, p. 10.—The author of it was some monk of St. Alban's; he makes Offa's real name Pineredus. The name Offa was derived from a king, whom he calls Offa primus, the son of Warmund, who had similar defects, and a cure as miraculous. His editor believes that this Offa primus never existed but in his page. I have however discovered him in Saxo-Grammaticus. Saxo says, Warmund, the 17th king of Denmark, had in his age a son named Uffo, who excelled his coevals in his person, but who was thought weak in mind, and never spoke till the king of Saxony endangered his father, &c. 59—65.

queathed to his queen, Drida, or Cynedrida, a series of adventures scarcely probable, and which have the aspect of having been invented, in order to impute to her more plausibly the crime which has stained the memory of Offa for ever.³¹

When he had enjoyed his throne many years, he began to covet an augmentation of dominion. Some of his attacks were against the Northumbrians,³² and the Hestingi.³³ He invaded Kent, and a great slaughter ensued at Otford, in which Offa triumphed, and Kent yielded to the genius of Mercia.³⁴ Afterwards he measured his strength with the king of Wessex, at Bensington, and established his great power by defeating Cynewulf, and subjecting part of his dominions.³⁵

Offa's wars.

774.

777.

The conquests of Offa have not been transmitted to us in accurate detail; but the celebrity which he attained, and the blood which his contemporary, Alcuin, attests him to have shed, imply many warlike exertions.³⁶ The prerogatives which he exercised, confirm the traditions of his power. He founded the abbey at St. Alban's, and the abbey of Bath; and made gifts of land to Canterbury, and other places, far beyond the limits of his inherited domains.³⁷

Offa had a correspondence with Charlemagne, which does credit to the Frankish sovereign. In one letter, Charle-

Corresponds with Charlemagne.

³¹ The account is, that the lady was allied to the French king, but for some crime was adjudged to die. Respect for majesty saved her from the ordeals of iron and fire. She was committed to the chances of the sea in an open boat, with little food; the stormy ocean threw her on the coast of Wales, and she was conducted to Offa. A plaintive story interested his compassion, and he recommended her to the protection of his mother. Her charms or her wiles animated his pity into love, and she became his wife. *Vita Offæ*, p. 12.

³² Bromton, x Script. p. 776. puts the Northumbri first; but Huntingdon, 343. places them after his other conquests. So Matt. West. 275. and Hoveden, 409.

³³ Mailros, p. 138. Hoveden, 403. Sim. Dun. 107.—The situation of these people is contested. Mr. Watts thinks them of Hast-

ings, one of the Cinque Ports. Langhorn, p. 29, believes the word to have meant east men, and to have alluded to the east part of Northumbria.—Perhaps it was the people of Hastingden, in Lancashire, which has been a considerable town.

³⁴ Mailros, 138. Sax. Chron. 61. Vit. Offæ, p. 15.

³⁵ Sax. Chron. 61. M. West. 279.

³⁶ Alcuin, the preceptor of Charlemagne, speaking of the immature fate of Offa's son, mentions, that pater suus pro confirmatione regni ejus multum sanguinem effudit. Ap. Malmsb. de Gest. p. 33.

³⁷ Matt. West. 284. Dugdale Monasticon, 1. p. 19. 62. 177. 184. Matt. West. p. 288. enumerates twenty-three counties which Offa governed. Amongst these the districts of East Anglia, Essex, and part of Wessex and Northumbria, are recited.

Offa's wars
with the
Britons.

Charlemagne promises security to all pilgrims, and his especial protection and legal interference to all commercial adventurers, on their paying the requisite duties. He greets Offa with expressions of friendship, and sends him a belt, an Hungarian sword, and two silken cloaks.³⁸

A discord of some moment interrupted this amity. All intercourse between the two countries was reciprocally interdicted;³⁹ but the quarrel is not stated to have lasted long. Offa had also a quarrel with the pope.

The wars of Offa with the Britons were at first to his disadvantage. Some branches of the Cymry penetrated in an incursion into Mercia. Their united attack drove the English from the Severn; they frequently repeated their devastations. Offa obtained an accumulation of the forces of the Anglo-Saxons, and marched into Wales. The Britons, unable to withstand him, quitted the open country between the Severn and the Wye, and withdrew to their mountains. Impregnable

³⁸ Malmsb. 32. In the second volume of Du Chesne's Hist. Franc. Scriptorum, p. 686. is another letter from Charlemagne to Offa. The king states the guilty conduct of a Presbyter et Scottus, who had eaten meat in Lent. The king mentions that the clergy in France, for want of full evidence, had declined to pass sentence upon him; and adds that, as he could not remain where he was, from the infamy of the thing, and lest the sacerdotal honour should be thought by the ignorant vulgar to be tarnished, and lest others should be induced to violate the sacred fast, Charlemagne thought it fittest to send him to abide the judgment of his bishop.

Another monument of their intercourse exists in a letter from Charlemagne to the archbishop Athilhard, whom Alcuin styles, the Primate of Canterbury. In this letter the humanity of Charlemagne is nobly distinguished. It is in behalf of some exiles, for whom he intreats the prelate to intercede with Offa, that they may have leave to return to their country in peace, and secured from the oppression of injustice. He says, their lord, Vinhringstan, was dead, who he thinks would have proved faithful to his lord, if he might have remained in his

country. "To escape the peril of death, he fled to us, but was always ready to purge himself from all infidelity. We kept him with us not from enmity, but with the hope of producing a reconciliation. As to these his followers, if you can obtain their peace, let them remain in the country. But," adds this humane king, "If my brother answers harshly about them, send them to us uninjured. It is better to travel than to perish; it is better to serve in another country than to die at home. But I trust to the goodness of my brother, if you strongly intercede for them, that he may receive them kindly for love of us, or rather for the love of Christ."

The delicacy of this application is peculiar. He does not write to Offa, because he will not compromise his own dignity by subjecting it to a refusal, nor appear to dictate to another prince; he employs an honoured minister of peace; he applies to Offa the tender epithet of my brother; and he makes a denial almost impossible, by the disinterested humanity which he intends to show them, if Offa is inexorable. 2 Du Chesne, p. 678.

³⁹ Alcuin ap. Malmsb. 32.

among these natural fortresses, they awaited the return of the invaders, and then sallied out in new aggressions. To terminate these wasteful incursions, Offa annexed the eastern regions of Wales, as far as the Wye, to Mercia, planted them with Anglo-Saxons, and separated them from the Britons by an immense trench and rampart, extending from the æstuary of the Dee to the mouth of the Wye.⁴⁰ It was carried through marshes, and over mountains and rivers, for an hundred miles, and was long celebrated under the name of Claudh Offa, or Offa's Dyke.⁴¹ Its remains and direction are yet visible.⁴² It was used for ages afterwards, as the boundary which determined the confines of England and Wales, a boundary jealously guarded with the most rigorous penalties.⁴³

His Dyke.

The basest action of Offa was the murder of Ethelbert, king of East Anglia.

Offa's murder
of Ethelbert.

At the close of Offa's reign, Ethelbert possessed the crown of East Anglia, a peaceful and intelligent prince, in the bloom of youth and beauty, interesting in his manners, and virtuous in his disposition.⁴⁴ Invited or welcomed by Offa,⁴⁵ he went

⁴⁰ Brut y Tywys p. 473. Brut y Saeson, p. 474. Asser, de Gestis Elfredi, 10. Sim. Dunelm. p. 118. After these events the princes of Powys moved their royal seat from Pengwern, or Shrewsbury, to Mathraval in Montgomeryshire. Where the royal castle of Mathraval stood, a small farm house is the only building visible now.

⁴¹ Lhwyd Comment. Brit. Descript. 42. —Almost all the cities and towns on its eastern side in ton vel ham finientia habent. Ib.

⁴² "It may be seen on Brachy Hill, and near Ryhd av Helig, and Lanterden in Herefordshire, and is continued northwards from Knighton, over a part of Shropshire, into Montgomeryshire, and may be traced over the long mountain, called in Welsh Kevn Digolh, to Harden Castle, cross the Severn, and Lhan-Drinio Common. Thence it passes the Vyrnwy again into Shropshire, not far from Oswaldstry. In Denbighshire it is visible along the road between Rhywabon and

Wrexham; from whence, being continued through Flintshire, it ends a little below Holywell, where that water falls into the Dee at a place formerly the scite of the castle of Basingwerk." Gibson's Additions to Camden's Radnorshire, p. 587. ed. 1695.

⁴³ Jo. Sarisb. Polycrat. in his De nugis curialium, l. 6. p. 184. second side, relates, that the Welsh making irruptions, Harold was sent by Edward against them; he pursued them with light armed troops, reached their hills of snows, ravaged all around with great slaughter, and made a law, that every Briton who should be found with a weapon on this side of Offa's Dyke, should have his right hand cut off.—Camden mentions this law.

⁴⁴ Flor. Wig. 281. Vita Offæ, 23.

⁴⁵ The welcome is affirmed by all. The invitation by Malmsbury, 29. and the author of the Life of Offa, p. 23. and Hen. Silgrave, MSS. Cott. Cleop. A. 12.

to Mercia, for the purpose of receiving the hand of Etheldritha, the daughter of the Mercian king. His splendid retinue became his own dignity, and was a pleasing homage to the merit of his betrothed. Offa received him with that distinction which was due to the allotted husband of his daughter. But before the marriage was completed, Ethelbert was assassinated, and the father of his beloved was the author of the murder. Though Offa had pledged his protection, had received the king of East Anglia as his guest, had introduced him to his daughter as her approved husband, and the nuptial feast had begun, Offa procured his assassination.⁴⁶ The favourable moment of annexing East Anglia to Mercia was a temptation which overpowered the feelings of the father and the man. The friends of Ethelbert fled in consternation. Offa invaded his dominions, and East Anglia was added to his conquests.

Calamities of
Offa's family.

Did such a complication of crimes benefit the perpetrator? Before two years elapsed, he sunk from his empire to his grave. Remorse embittered all the interval. His widowed daughter abandoned his court, fled into the marshes of Croyland, and pined away her life in mourning solitude;⁴⁷ his queen, the evil counsellor of his ambition, perished miserably;⁴⁸ the husband of another of his daughters was cut off in the same year with himself;⁴⁹ the other, who married Brihtric, died a martyr to vice and penury the most extreme, scorned and abhorred;⁵⁰ and his son Ecgfrid, who succeeded him, was permitted to exist only 141 days.⁵¹ The race of Offa dis-

⁴⁶ That Offa commanded the murder is expressly asserted by Ethelwerd, 840. Hoveden, 410. Huntingdon, 344. Sax. Chron. 65. Flor. Wig. 281. Malmsb. de Pont. 287. Bromton, 749. Higden, 251. Rad. Dicet. 446. and Asseri Annal. 154. Their uniting evidence does away the attempt of Matt. West. p. 283. and the fabulous monk of St. Alban's, in Vita Offæ, p. 23. who want to fix it solely on the queen.—Both these apologists admit that Offa immediately seized East Anglia; and such an action, after such

a catastrophe, is among the most forcible evidences of his guilt and its motive.

⁴⁷ Ingulf. 7. Bromton, 752. Vit. Offæ, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Vit. Offæ, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Ethelred, the son of Moll.

⁵⁰ See further, p. 175.

⁵¹ Bromton, 754. Hunt. 344. Ingulf. 6. Offa went to Rome before his death, and extended to his own dominions the liberality of Ina, called Romescot. It was with strict truth that the friend of the great Alfred

appeared for ever. Such are the blessings of a prosperity founded upon vice!

During the reign of Offa, the sceptre of Wessex had been swayed, since 755, by Cynewulf. He warred with the Britons successfully,⁵² and met Offa in the disastrous conflict at Bensington. After a reign of many years, he fell a victim to revenge and desperation. He endeavoured to expel Cyneheard, the brother of the deposed Sigebyrht; a suspicion that he was meditating retaliation, occasioned the attempt.⁵³ Cyneheard determined to prevent the blow; he watched the unguarded moment when the king with a few attendants visited a lady at Merton in Surrey; he collected about eighty desperadoes, hastened to the place, and surrounded the chamber to which the king had retired, before his friends were aware of his danger. The king quitted the apartment, and vigorously defended himself; he beheld Cyneheard, and, rushing forward, severely wounded him; but no courage could prevail against such numbers. Cynewulf was slain. Roused by the clamour of the struggle, his thanes hurried to the conflict. Safety and wealth were offered to them by the assassins; but no bribes could repress their loyal indignation; and they fell nobly by their master's side; one British hostage only escaped, desperately wounded. In the morning, the dismal tidings had circulated; and the great officers of the royal household, Osric, the friend, and Weverth, the faithful minister of Cynewulf, with their attendants, rode to the town. Cyneheard profusely poured forth his promises and presents, if they would assist him to obtain the crown. The disinterested thanes disdained the favours of a murderer, forced an en-

CHAP.
VI.

Cynewulf
of Wessex
assassinated.

784.

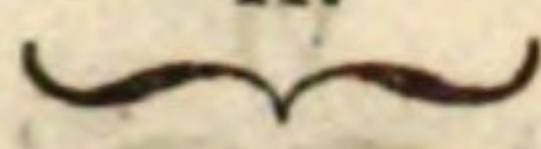
The murder-
ers punished.

mentions Offa with the epithet "universis
"circa se regibus et regionibus finitimis
"formidolosus rex." Asser de Reb. Gest.
Elfredi, p. 10.

⁵² Flor. Wig. 274. Sax. Chron. 57. Of
Cornwall, I presume; for in his charter to
the Monastery at Wells, dated 766, he ad-

duces among his motives to the donation
pro aliqua vexatione inimicorum nostrorum
Cornubiorum gentis. See it ap. Dugd. 1.
186.

⁵³ Matt. West. 280.—This author states,
that Cyneheard had been banished.

BOOK
II.

784.

Brihtric
succeeds.

787.

Danes first
land in
England.Vices of
the Queen
Eadburga.She poisons
Brihtric.She escapes
to France.

trance with their battle-axes, and a deadly contest ensued. The guilty perished.⁵⁴

This melancholy catastrophe produced the dignity of Brihtric. He was of the race of Cerdic,⁵⁵ and married Eadburga, the daughter of Offa. The year of his accession was distinguished as that in which the Danes first landed on the English shore. The gerefæ of the place went out to see the strangers, who had arrived with three vessels, and was instantly killed.⁵⁶ Their incursion was repeated on other parts of the island.

The wife of Brihtric, or Beorhtric, is expressed by Asser to have imitated the tyranny of her father, Offa; to have hated all to whom her husband was attached, and to have done whatever was odious to mankind. She became familiar with crimes which the gentleness of female nature never perpetrates till its moral sentiments have been erased. She accused to the king whomsoever her caprice disliked, and thus deprived them of life or power. When he refused the gratification to her malice, the secret poison was her deadly minister.

To one youth the king was so attached, that her arts were fruitlessly exerted to procure his disgrace. She mingled for him the cup of death. It was the destiny of Brihtric, that by accident he should drink the contents. Thus punished for his unjust compliances with the malignancy of Eadburga, he expired as well as the youth,⁵⁷ and was succeeded by Egbert.

Driven out of Wessex, the wretched woman sailed with great treasures to France, and presented herself to Charlemagne. With splendid presents she stood before the throne:

⁵⁴ Sax. Chron. 59. 63. Flor. Wig. 278. Hunt. 343.

⁵⁵ Sax Chron. 63.

⁵⁶ Sax. Chron. 64. Flor. Wig. 280. and see F. thelwerd.

⁵⁷ Asser relates these incidents from the communications of his illustrious master:

“ Quod a domino meo Ælfredo Angulsaxonum rege veredico, etiam sæpe mihi referente audivi,” p. 10. The Saxon Chronicle mentions Worr as the ealdorman who died with Brihtric, p. 68. Brihtric was buried in Tewksbury. Chron. De Tewksb. MSS. Cott. Cleop. c. 3.

“ Chuse, Eadburga,” said the king, “ which you prefer, me or my son.”—“ Your son,” was her answer, “ because he is youngest.” The monarch tauntingly assured her, that if she had selected him, he should have transferred her to his son; but that as her election had been otherwise, she should have neither. He gave her what he thought better suited her immorality, the habit and discipline of a cloister; but even in this retreat she indulged her depravity, and was turned out of the society. In poverty and miserable vice she dragged on a loathed existence, and at last, accompanied by a little girl, she begged her daily bread at Pavia; and closed an abandoned life, by a deplorable death.⁵⁸

Her miserable end.

⁵⁸ Asser says he had this fact from many who had seen her, p. 12.—In 798 London was burnt, with many of its inhabitants. Chron. Pet. p. 10.

Epbert's re-
flect with
Charles-
magne.

C H A P. VII.

*The Reigns of Egbert and Ethelwulf.—Alfred's Birth.*BOOK
II.Egbert's
ancestors.

EGBERT was the son of Alcmund, or Ethelmund, the great grandson of Inigils, the brother of Ina. Alcmund was left early in his mother's care, and his sisters were sent into Saxony for their education, where they became religious.* Egbert received the instruction of the times, and his talents gave splendor to his youth. When Brihtric became king of Wessex, the popularity of Egbert excited his mistrust, and he projected his destruction. To avert the danger, Egbert fled to Offa. The messengers of Brihtric followed him; and, to debar the young exile from the friendship of Mercia, they solicited for their master the daughter of Offa. Eadburga was betrothed to Brihtric, and Egbert sailed to the coast of France, where he greatly improved his mind.*

Egbert's re-
treat with
Charle-
magne.

It was after 787, that he left Offa for the court of Charlemagne. This indefatigable monarch, whom Europe every year beheld in a new part of its varied climate, pouring his disciplined warriors on the powerful savage tribes, which swarmed between the German Ocean and the mouth of the Danube, in the year 788 marched against the Sclavonians on the Baltic. Scarce had they submitted, but the Huns were invading him, and he was also summoned towards Naples by the hostilities of the eastern empire. He subdued the Avarians and the Huns, the modern Austrians and Hungarians. When Saxony revolted, he determined to extirpate the most mutinous

* Wallingford, 3 Gale, 531. See Thorn. 2. x Scrip. 2211. and 3 Lel. 55. The Saxon Chronicle makes the father of Egbert king

of Kent, p. 63. and Higden intitles him sub reguli, p. 252. So Rudborne.

² Malmsb. l. 2. c. 1. p. 36. Hen. Silgrave, Cott. MSS. p. 12.

of these barbarians. The fate of 30,000 men evinced the horrible execution of his determination.

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VII.

On his return from this expedition, he passed his winter at Aix la Chapelle, a place with which he was much delighted. In the subsequent years we find him at Paderborn, afterwards traversing the French coasts, visiting the diet at Mentz, and, in the year 800, marching into Italy through Suabia and Friuli.

795.

It was in this year that Egbert was summoned out of the French empire to the throne of England. As he was the only descendant of Cerdic that was in existence,³ his accession was highly popular in Wessex.

800.
Egbert re-
turns to
England.

At the period of his accession, the island, though nominally under an hexarchy, was fast verging into a triarchy. The petty powers of Kent, Essex, and East Anglia, had already become the satellites of Mercia; Northumbria, occupied in producing and destroying a succession of usurpers and turbulent nobles, had ceased to molest her neighbours; Wessex had enlarged herself by the incorporation of Sussex; its population and wealth multiplied under the peaceable administration of Brihtric, and a series of able sovereigns had reduced the nobles of the land to an useful subordination. The force of Wessex was therefore a well organized concentration of various powers, ready to operate with all their energies for any great purpose to which they should be summoned.

State of
England.

At this crisis Egbert acceded. The friendship of Charlemagne had educated him to the arts of empire.⁴ From his example he learnt the difficult policy of governing, with vigour and prudence, the discordant members of a great body politic. The character of Charlemagne was a mixture of cultivated

³ Malmsbury, l. 1. c. 2. p. 16.

⁴ Malmsbury says of the Franks, est enim gens illa et exercitatione virium et comitate morum cunctarum occidentalium facile princeps; he mentions that Egbert regnandi

disciplinam a Francis acciperet, and that with them aciem mentis expediret et mores longè a gentilitia barbarie alienos indueret. l. 2. c. 1. p. 36.

BOOK

II.

800.

intellect and barbarism, which was likely to have excited and improved the mind of Egbert; and in the wars of the Franks he must have imbibed a military knowledge superior to that of every Anglo-Saxon competitor.

His mild government completed the attachment of his subjects, and the tranquillity of the first years of his reign fostered his growing strength.

Kenwulf in
Mercia.

For the first nineteen years of Egbert's reign, Kenwulf continued to sit on the throne of Mercia. He had subdued Kent, and ruled Mercia and its appendages with an ability which suspended the ambition of the West Saxon king. Kenwulf is mentioned with applause for his peacefulness, piety, and justice.⁵ His ability was known to his contemporaries, and secured his repose.

813.

Egbert de-
feats the
Western
Britons.

It was on the inferior Britons of the West, that Egbert first tried the efficacy of his military strength. He penetrated successfully into Devonshire and Cornwall; resistance was in vain; and he ravaged, unchecked, from the East to the West.⁶

819.

Kenwulf's
death.

The path to his greatness was laid open to Egbert by the death of Kenwulf.⁷ His wisdom had completed the efforts of Offa for the power of Mercia; and had his sceptre fallen into a hand of equal energy, Wessex might not at this period have risen lord of the ascendant.

Rivalry of
Wessex and
Mercia.

But to such a degree of strength had these rival states respectively attained, that it was obvious a serious competition must soon arise for one to be mistress of the whole. The humiliation of the other powers increased the rivalry of these. Two neighbouring co-equals in power cannot long exist in amity together, because man is too much a being of hope and envy, and too little appreciates tranquillity and content. By its political power, Mercia promised to win in

⁵ Ingulf. Hist. p. 6. rex justissimus. Chron. Pet. 10.

⁶ Sax. Chron. 69. Flor. Wigorn. 285. Malmsb. 36. Ethelw. 840. In the year 816,

the English school at Rome was burnt. Flor. Wig. 285.

⁷ Ingulf. 7.

the approaching race of supremacy; but Wessex was rising so fast into importance, that nothing less than a continuation of able government in Mercia could suppress its competition. Both had reached that point of power, that the state, which first was disquieted by the evils of a weak administration would inevitably fall under the pressure of the other.

Egbert and Kenwulf governed their several kingdoms with such steady capacity, that, during their co-existence, the balance was not determined. If Kenwulf had been the survivor, and minors or incapable men, harassed by factious chiefs, had succeeded to the throne of Egbert, then Mercia would have acquired the monarchy of England; but the coveted distinction was allotted to Wessex, and the causes powerful enough to reduce a nation, were suffered to operate in Mercia.

Kenwulf left his son, Kinelm, a child of seven years of age, the heir to his crown, under the tutelage of his marriageable daughters. The eldest of these, Windreda, hopeful of acquiring a permanent authority, resolved on her brother's death. He was carried by his foster-father, under pretence of hunting, into a wood, and there murdered. Her crime failed to profit her. Her uncle, Ceolwulf, took the crown; in his second year he was driven out by Beornwulf.⁸

819.

The son of
Kenwulf
murdered.

Ceolwulf.

These distractions checked Mercia in her career of dignity. Beornwulf became by his usurpation rather the king of his party than sovereign of the united population of his territory. He had acquired his throne by violence; yet if his skill had been equal to the crisis, he might have consolidated his power; but he is characterized as a fool, rich and powerful, though of no regal ancestry.⁹ With giddy precipitancy he plunged into a personal competition with Egbert, and linked the fate of Mercia in his own.¹⁰

Beornwulf, a
weak prince.

⁸ Ingulf. 7. Flor. Wig. 286.

⁹ Ingulf. 7. A Bernulpho quodam fatuoso et divitiis ac potentia pollenti, in nullo que lineam regalem contingente expulsus est.

¹⁰ In 823, a furious battle at Gafelford, or Camelford, in Cornwall. Sax. Chron. 70. Flor. Wig. 287. The men of Devonshire are particularized as the combatants who

BOOK
II.

823.

Beornwulf
makes war
on Egbert.Egbert's
victory.Its conse-
quences.Incites the
East Angli-
ans against
Mercia.

It was in this year that Beornwulf rushed to that collision, which the wary Egbert seems to have been reluctant to hazard. The twenty-three years forbearance of the West Saxon prince, indicates no inordinate ambition; but the hostilities of Beornwulf roused him into activity. At Wilton the competition between the two states was brought to issue.¹¹ The superior strength of the forces of Mercia was balanced by the skill of Egbert. A furious battle ensued, which the rival armies maintained with great obstinacy; but at length Egbert conquered with great slaughter, and Beornwulf fled in irremediable confusion.

Egbert derived from his victory all the consequences of which it was so fruitful; he beheld the favourable moment for breaking the power of Mercia for ever, and he seized it with avidity. He dispatched his son, Ethelwulf, and the warlike bishop and able statesman, Ealstan, with a competent army, into Kent, who drove the royal dependent of Mercia over the Thames;¹² and then Kent, and its neighbour, Essex, became for ever united to the crown of Wessex.

Egbert pursued his scheme of aggrandizement with careful policy. He forebore to invade Mercia; for though it had been defeated, it abounded yet with courageous soldiery; and Egbert seems to have been cautious of putting too much into hazard. Instead of attacking Beornwulf in Mercia, Egbert fomented the discontent with which the East Anglians endured the Mercian yoke; by promise of support he excited East Anglia to revolt, and thus engaged his rival in a new warfare.¹³

conflicted with the Cornish Britons. The pieces of armour, rings, and brass furniture for horses, dug up here, and the local tradition of a bloody battle, may be collateral evidences of this struggle; but they are also claimed by Leland as the attestations of the celebrated fight of Camlan, which he places on this spot. Whether Egbert or his generals commanded against the Britons, is not decisively ascertained.

¹¹ Sax. Chron. 70. Flor. Wig. 287. Huntingd. 344.

¹² Sax. Chron. 70. Wallingf. 534. Hunt. 345. Flor. Wig. 287. The year 824 is remarked by continental annalists to have had a winter so extremely severe, that not only animals, but many of the human race, perished in the excessive cold. See Annal. Fuldenses. 6 Bouquet's Recueil, p. 208. The Annals add a description of a huge stone which fell from the air!

¹³ Ingulf. 7.

Beornwulf went in anger to chastise the East Anglians. His incapacity again disgraced him with a defeat; he fell in the contest;¹⁴ and was succeeded by Ludecan, who again led the forces of Mercia against East Anglia; but he was as unfortunate as his predecessor, and found a grave where he had hoped for empire. Wiglaf, the governor or prince of Worcestershire, succeeded.¹⁵

CHAP.
VII.

825.

Mercia's
disasters.

The views of Egbert were now accomplished. An important passage of Ingulfus pours light on the policy of Egbert. He says that the two usurpers, Beornwulf and Ludecan, by their imprudence destroyed all the military strength of Mercia, which had been most numerous and victorious.¹⁶ For this event Egbert seems to have waited; and as soon as he found that Mercia had exhausted herself against others, his caution was thrown aside, and his officers marched his army immediately into Mercia. Wiglaf, attacked before he could recruit his army, fled from his new dominion, and concealed himself from the eager searches of Egbert in the monastery of Croyland. That interesting character, Ethelburga, widowed in the hour of the marriage feast by her father Offa's crime, sheltered the fugitive prince in her respected cell.¹⁷ How painfully must she have moralized on the deed which had not only destroyed her happiness, but had contributed in its consequences to the ruin of Mercia!

Egbert
invades
Mercia.

The negotiations of the venerable abbot of Croyland preserved Wiglaf, but completed the inevitable degradation of Mercia. Egbert agreed to the king's continuing on the throne as the tributary vassal of Wessex. The expressions of Wiglaf, in the charter of Croyland, six years after this pacification, are, "I have procured it to be confirmed by my lord, Egbert, king of Wessex, and his son."—"In the presence of my lords,

827.

Wiglaf sub-
mits to him.

¹⁴ Ingulf. 7. Chron. Petr. 12.

¹⁵ Ib.

¹⁶ Regno vehementer oppresso, totam militiam ejus, quæ quondam plurima extiterat,

et victoriosissima, sua imprudentia perdiderant. Ing. 7.

¹⁷ Ing. 7.

BOOK
II.827
Egbert in-
vades
Northum-
bria.Its submis-
sion.828.
Wales over-
run.832.
The Danes
invade
Egbert.

Egbert and Athelwulph."¹⁸—The payment of the tribute is attested by Ingulf.¹⁹ The submission of East Anglia was consequential to the humiliation of Mercia.

Northumbria had not yet felt his power. Eardulf, whom we left reigning at the beginning of this the ninth century, had assumed a hostile posture against Kenwulf of Mercia, but the clergy interposed, and procured a reconciliation.²⁰ In 806, Eardulf was driven out, and the province continued without a king for a long time.²¹ Alfwold is mentioned afterwards, as a fleeting monarch of two years; and Eanred, the son of Eardulf, then succeeded for thirty-three years, and transmitted it to his son.²² It was against Eanred that Egbert marched, after the conquest of Mercia. The Northumbrian prince was too prudent to engage his turbulent and exhausted kingdom in a war with Egbert; he felt the imperious necessity, and obeyed it. At Dore, beyond the Humber, he met the West Saxon prince, and amicably acknowledged his superiority.²³

The Anglo-Saxon octarchy thus subdued, he turned the tide of conquest towards Wales. With a numerous army he penetrated to Snowdon, the Parnassus of the Cambrian bards. The genius of North Wales bowed before his battalions, and they reached Denbighland and Anglesey.²⁴

The only enemy that baffled the genius of Egbert was the Danes. They ravaged the isle of Sheppey, and in the next year defeated Egbert, at Charmouth in Dorsetshire.²⁵ This disaster, perhaps, occasioned that council which Wiglaf, in his charter to Croyland, mentions to have met this year at London, for the purpose of deliberating on the Danish depre-

¹⁸ Per dominum meum Egbertum regem West Saxonie et Athelwulphum filium ejus illud obtinui confirmari. Ing. 9.—In presentia dominorum meorum Egberti regis West Saxonie et Athelwulphi filii ejus. Ing. 10.

¹⁹ Promissa tributis annuallis pensione. Ing. 8.

²⁰ Sim. Dunelm. de Gestis Reg. Angl. 117.

²¹ Chron. Mailros, 141.

²² Sim. Dunelm. de Dunel. Eccles. 13.

²³ Sax. Chron. 71. Flor. Wigorn. 288.

²⁴ Brut y Saeson, 475. Brut y Tywysog.

²⁵ Sax. Chron. 72. Ethelwerd, 841.

²⁶ Sax. Chron. 72.

dations.²⁶ The efficacy of the measures adopted by the council appeared at Hengston Hill, in Cornwall. The Danes landed in this part of the island, and the Cornish Britons, from fear or voluntary policy, entered into offensive alliance with them against Egbert. The king of Wessex defeated their combined forces with great slaughter.²⁷

After a reign of prosperity seldom rivalled, Egbert died, full of glory.²⁸ The tale, that he assembled the Anglo-Saxon states, and, abolishing the distinction of Saxons and Angles, and all provincial appellations, commanded the island to be called England, and procured himself to be crowned and intitled king of England, seems not intitled to our belief.²⁹

836.

Egbert's death.

Ethelwulf, who succeeded his father, had been a monk. But on the unexpected death of his elder brother, the papal dispensation was obtained to release him from his sacred obli-

Ethelwulf accedes.

²⁶ Ingulf. 10. (Ubi omnes congregati fuimus pro concilio capiendis contra Danicos piratas littora Angliæ assidue infestantes.)

²⁷ Sax. Chron. 72.

²⁸ Sax. Chr. 73. Flor. Wig. 291. Higden, 253. Chron. Petri de Burgo, 13. The Chronicle of Mailros says in 838, p. 142. The Asserii Annales, 839, p. 155. Wallingford, 837, p. 531. On the 26th January, in the year 839, an unusual inundation of the sea devastated all Frisia, so that it was almost on a level with the copious masses of sands, called there Dunos (Downs). Animals, men, and houses, were destroyed by the waters. The number of the inhabitants known to have perished in the deluge, was 2437. Annal. Bertiniani. 6 Bouquet's Recueil.

²⁹ I was induced, as early as I began this work, to doubt this popular tale, by observing these circumstances: 1. That although if such an act had taken place, the legal title of Egbert and his successors would have been rex Anglorum; yet that neither he nor his successors, till after Alfred, ever used it. In his charters Ethelwulf always signs king of the West Saxons; so do his three sons; so Alfred, and in his will he says, I, Alfred, of the West Saxons, king. Asser, the friend of this king, styles Ethelwulf and his three sons always kings of the West Saxons, p. 6—21. It is with Alfred that he begins to use a different title; he names him Angul Saxonum rex.—2. Egbert did not establish the

monarchy of England: he asserted the predominance of Wessex over the others, whom he defeated or made tributary, but he did not incorporate East Anglia, Mercia, or Northumbria. It was the Danish sword which destroyed these kingdoms, and thereby made Alfred the monarcha of the Saxons; accordingly, Alfred is called primus monarcha by some; but, in strict truth, the monarchy of England must not even be attributed to him, because a Danish sovereign divided the island with him. It was Athelstan who destroyed the Danish sovereignty, who may, with the greatest propriety, be intitled primus monarcha Anglorum, and accordingly Alfred of Beverly so intimates him, p. 93. Totius Angliæ monarchiam primus Anglo-Saxonum obtinuit Edelstanus.—3. The important incidents of the coronation, and change of name, are not mentioned by the best writers. The Saxon Chronicle, Florence of Worcester, Asser, Ethelwerd, Ingulf, Huntingdon, Hoveden, Brompton, Malmsbury, the Chronicle of Mailros, of Peterborough, and Matthew of Westminster, say nothing about it.—4. Why should Egbert, a Saxon, have given the Angles a preference in the royal title? The fact seems to be, that the people of the provinces colonized by the Angles, had been long called Angli. Bede and Boniface, in the century before Egbert, so call them.

BOOK
II.

gations. His mind was indolent and weak. His minister, Alstan, bishop of Sherborne, ably supplied his master's deficiency.³⁰

837-840. The Danes made several descents on the English coasts; and at length ventured to winter in the Isle of Thanet. In the

852.

next spring they entered the Thames, with three hundred and fifty ships, plundered Canterbury and London, defeated Bertulph,³¹ who reigned in Mercia after Wiglaf, and then entered Surrey. The West Saxons met them under Ethelwulf and his son Ethelbald. At Aclea, the field of oaks, a battle ensued, which the desperate courage of both armies made long and very deadly. It was not until the greatest part of the invaders had perished, that they lost their ground. The English at last triumphed: the battle was so destructive, that Asser, who lived in the period when the Northmen maintained the most furious contests, yet attests that so great a slaughter of the invaders had never been known before that day, or during his experience since.³² Some other parts of the country experienced their attacks.³³

Birth of
Alfred.

The year 849 was distinguished by the nativity of Alfred. Ethelwulf had married Osberga, the daughter of Oslac, a man mentioned with an epithet of celebrity, and the king's cup-bearer. Oslac had sprung from the chieftain, who, in the time of Cerdic, had obtained the Isle of Wight.³⁴ After three elder sons, Osberga was delivered of Alfred, at Wantage in Berkshire.³⁵ She is highly extolled for her piety and

³⁰ Malmsb. 37. Wallingford, 532.

³¹ Ingulf. 11. Sax. Chron. 74. Flor. Wig. 295.

³² Asser, p. 6. Voltaire has strangely mistated the facts of this invasion. He says, "On pretend qu'en 852, ils remonterent la Tamise avec trois cens voiles. Les Anglais ne se defendirent mieux que les Francs. Ils payerent comme eux leurs vainqueurs. Un roi nomme Ethelbert suivit le malheureux exemple de Charles le chauve. Il donna de l'argent. Essai sur les mœurs. Oeuvres complètes, t. 16. p. 472, ed. 1785. In his previous paragraphs, he confounds the Britons with the English. Les Anglais—they n'étaient

échappés du joug des Romains que pour tomber sous celui de ces Saxons." ib.

³³ Asser, p. 6, 7. Sax. Chron. 74. Ethelwulf gave his daughter in marriage to Burrhed, who, in 852, acceded to Mercia. Asser. 7.

³⁴ Asser de rebus gestis Ælfredi, p. 4. ed. Ox. 1722. Oslac was alive at his grandson's birth; for he signed a charter, as the ambassador of Ethelwulf, which the king of Mercia gave to Croyland in 851. Ingulf. p. 15.

³⁵ Asser. p. 3. He adds, that the country was called Berroc scire, a berroc silva ubi buxus abundantissime nascitur.

understanding; but the education of Alfred must have lost the benefit of her talents, because his father married another lady before the sixth year of his childhood had expired. She is said to have given him to Swithin, the preceptor of his father, to be taught.³⁶ The bishop may have nurtured or infused that habitual piety for which Alfred was remarkable; but was unquestionably unfit for the office of literary tutor, as Alfred passed his childhood without knowing how to read.

In the fifth year of Alfred's age, his father seems to have formed an idea of making him his successor. For this purpose the child was sent to Rome, with a great train of nobility and others; where the pope anointed him king, at the request of his father.³⁷

853.
Alfred sent
to Rome.

It is expressly affirmed, that the king loved Alfred better than his other sons.³⁸ When the king went to Rome himself two years afterwards, he took Alfred with him, because he loved him with superior affection.³⁹ The presumption that he intended to make Alfred his successor, therefore, agrees with the fact of his paternal partiality. It is warranted by the declaration of Matthew of Westminster, that one of the causes of the rebellion which followed against Ethelwulf was, that he had caused Alfred to be crowned, thereby, as it were, excluding his other children from the chance of succession.⁴⁰

In Alfred's journey through France, he was very hospitably treated by Bertinus and Grimbald.⁴¹ When Alfred arrived in the course of nature at the royal dignity, he remembered Grimbald's services and talents, and requited them by a steady friendship.

³⁶ Rudborne Hist. Mag. p. 207.

³⁷ So Florence, 296. Sim. Dun. 139. Rad. diceto. 450. Chron. Mailros, 142. Matt. Westm. 307; and Cron. Joan. Taxton, MSS. Cotton. Lib. Julius, A. 1 affirm.

³⁸ Cum communi et ingenti patris sui et matris amore supra omnes fratres suos. Asser, 15. Matt. Westm. 307. Sim. Dun. 141. Flor. Wig. 297. express the same fact.

³⁹ Filium suum Ælfredum iterum in eandem viam secum ducens *eo quod*, illum plus ceteris filiis suis diligebat. Asser, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Causa autem bifaria erat, una quod filium juniorem Ælfredum quasi aliis a sorte regni exclusis, in regem Romæ fecerat coronari. Matt. West. p. 308.

⁴¹ Vita Grimbaldi. Lel. Collect. 1. p. 18.

BOOK
II.

Ethelwulf's
donation of
the Tenth.

Ethelwulf, obeying the impression of his ecclesiastical education, endowed the church with the tenth of all lands and goods, and exempted his donation from many impositions to which lands were liable.⁴² He went afterwards to Rome himself with great magnificence, accompanied by Alfred,⁴³ who was entering his seventh year. As the expeditions of the great to Rome were in those days usually by land, Ethelwulf went first into France, where Charles, the French king, received him with honour and royal liberality, and caused him to be conducted through his dominions with every respectful attention.⁴⁴

His presents
to the Pope.

The presents which the West-Saxon king carried to the pope were peculiarly splendid. A crown of pure gold, weighing four pounds, two golden vessels, called Baucas, a sword adorned with pure gold, two golden images, four Saxon dishes of silver gilt, besides valuable dresses, are enumerated by his contemporary, Anastasius. The king also gave a donative of gold to all the Roman clergy and nobles, and silver to the people.⁴⁵

Ethelwulf continued a year at Rome, and rebuilt the Saxon school which Ina had founded.⁴⁶ By the carelessness of its English inhabitants, it had been set on fire the preceding year, and was burnt to ashes.⁴⁷ One act which he did at Rome, entitles him to honourable remembrance. He saw that the public penitents and exiles were bound with iron, and he obtained an order from the pope that no Englishman, out of his country, should be put into bonds for penance.⁴⁸

⁴² Ingulf. 17. Asser, p. 8, says, the *decimam totius regni sui partem*. The Saxon Chron. The theothan dæl his londes, p. 76. But his Charta, as it exists in Ingulf, and the rest, thus expresses it: *aliquam portionem terrarum hereditariam antea possidentibus omnibus gradibus sive famulis et famulabus dei deo servientibus, sive laicis miseris semper decimam mansionem, ubi minimum sit, tum decimam partem omnium bonorum, in libertatem perpetuam donari sanctæ Ecclesiæ dijudicavi, &c. &c.*

⁴³ Asser, 9.

⁴⁴ *Annales Bertiniani* in Bouquet's *recueil*, t. 7. p. 71.

⁴⁵ Anastasius Bibliothecarius de *vitis Pontif.* v. i. p. 403. ed. Rome, 1718.

⁴⁶ Rudborne, 202. Anastasius describes it as an habitation: *quæ in eorum lingua burgus dicitur*, p. 317. The place where it was situated, was called the Saxon street, *Saxonum vicum*. Anast. 363.

⁴⁷ Anastasius, p. 317.

⁴⁸ Rudborne, 202.

In his way through France, he discovered that senility gave no exemption from love. In July he sued for an alliance with Judith, the daughter of Charles, and in October was married to her by Hincmar. He admitted her to share in the royal dignity, and the diadem was placed on her head.

CHAP.
VII.

856.

His marriage
with Judith.

Presents worthy of the high characters concerned were mutually given, and Ethelwulf took shipping for England.⁴⁹

But his connubial felicity was interrupted by intelligence of a successful conspiracy against his power, which menaced him with deposition and exile. It was conducted by Alstan, the bishop to whom he owed all his prosperity; and Ethelbald, the eldest of the legitimate princes, was placed at the head. The earl of Somerset participated in the effort. The principal object was to defeat the plans of Ethelwulf in favour of Alfred, and to invest Ethelbald with the crown.⁵⁰ The popular reason was, the elevation of his new wife to the dignity of queen. The crimes of Eadburga had incited the Anglo-Saxon nation to forbid the wife of any other of their kings to be crowned.⁵¹

The revolt
of Wessex.

In Selwood Forest the revolt first assumed a serious appearance. The king's absence favoured the scheme; and as the prospect of a stripling's succession, to the prejudice of brothers who to priority of birth added maturity of age, may have diminished the general loyalty; so the circumstances of his marriage concurred, fortunately for the conspirators, to complete his unpopularity. When Ethelwulf returned, he found the combination too powerful to be resisted; but the nobles of all Wessex would not permit him to be absolutely de-

His deposi-
tion.

⁴⁹ Annales Bertiniani, p. 72.—Asser, 8. The ceremony used at the coronation of Judith yet exists, and may be seen in Du Chesne's Hist. Franc. v. ii. p. 423.

⁵⁰ Matt. West. 308. Rudborne also states, that some write, quod filii insurrexerunt contra patrem propter invidiam quod frater mi-

nimus, viz. Alfredus ante omnes inunctus erat in regem jussione paterna, p. 201.

⁵¹ Asser, 10, 11. See the first volume of this history, p. 341. This degradation of their sovereign's queen was contrary, says Asser, to the custom of all the German nations.

BOOK
II.

throned; they promoted an accommodation between the two parties, on the plan, that Ethelbald should be put in possession of West Saxony, the best portion of the monarchy, and that Ethelwulf should be contented with the Eastern districts which Ethelstan had enjoyed. The king, averse to war, and perhaps intimidated by the strength of his opponents, submitted to the proposition.⁵²

⁵² Asser, 9.

C H A P. VIII.

The Reigns of Ethelbald, and Ethelbert.

Alfred's Education.

BY wresting the sceptre of Wessex from the hand of his father, Ethelbald gained a very short interval of regal pomp. His father survived the disappointment of his hope and the diminution of his power but two years, and Ethelbald outlived him scarcely three more. Ethelwulf, by his will, left landed possessions to three of his sons, and it is a proof of his placable disposition, that Ethelbald was one; the others were Ethelred and Alfred; the survivor of the three was to inherit the bequest.¹ His other son, his daughter, and kinsmen, and also his nobles, partook of his testamentary liberality.²

Soon after Ethelwulf's decease, Ethelbald married his widow, Judith, in defiance of religious institutions and the customs of every Christian state.³ On the exhortations of Swithin, he is represented to have dismissed her, and to have passed the remainder of his short life in reputation and justice.⁴

Some time after the death of Ethelbald, Judith sold her possessions in England, and returned to her father; she lived at Senlis with regal dignity. Here she was seen by Baldwin, surnamed the Arm of Iron, whom she married. He was descended from the count, who had cultivated and occupied

C H A P.
VIII.

856.

Judith's third marriage.

¹ See Alfred's will, published by Mr. Astle, which recites this devise.

² Asser, 12. He left a charitable charge upon his lands, a legacy to the pope, and another to illuminate St. Peter and St. Paul's churches at Rome on Easter eve and the ensuing dawn, ib.

³ Asser, 23. But this author, and they

who follow him, are wrong in stating that it was done against the custom of the pagans; for Eadwald, king of Kent, had done the same in 616; and the Saxon Chronicle, in mentioning that event, says, he lived "on hæthenum theawe swa, that he hæfde his fæder lawe to wive," p. 26.

⁴ Matt. West. 310. Rudborne, 204.

BOOK
II.
856.

Flanders.⁵ The pope reconciled him with the king of France, her father,⁶ who gave to Baldwin all the region between the Scheld, the Sambre, and the Sea, and created him count of the empire, that he might be the bulwark of the French kingdom against the Northmen.⁷

Baldwin built Bruges in 856, as a fortress to coerce them, and died in 880, having enjoyed his honours with peculiar celebrity.⁸

860.
Ethelbert
accedes.

On the death of Ethelbald, the kingdom of Wessex became the possession of Ethelbert, his brother, who had been already reigning in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex.

In his days, the tranquillity of England was again endangered; a large fleet of the northern vikings suddenly appeared off Winchester and ravaged it, but as they were retiring with their plunder, they were overtaken and chased to their ships by the earls of Hampshire and Berkshire.

Vueland, their commander, led them from England to France; with above 300 ships they shaded the Seine, and Charles averted their hostilities by a present of 5000 pounds of silver. The winter forbidding them to navigate the sea, they dispersed themselves along the Seine and the adjacent shores in different bands.⁹ Such incursions induced the Flemings to fortify their residences.¹⁰

In 864, the direful visitors wintered in Thanet. While the Kentish men were offering money, to be spared from their

⁵ Annales Bertiniani Bouquet, t. 7. p. 77. —The Genealogia comitum Flandriæ scripta seculo 12, says, A. 792, Lidricus Harlebencensis comes videns Flandriam vacuum et incultam et nemorosam occupavit eam. Ib. p. 81. he was the great grandfather of Baldwin. Previous to Baldwin, Flanders was in the hands of foresters, Espinoy's recherches, p. 5.

⁶ The pope's letters to Charles, and his queen, Hermentrudes, are in Miræi opera diplomatica, 1. p. 132. Hincmar's letter to the pope, stating what he had done in obedience to his order, is in the same work, p. 25. The pope hints to Charles, that if his anger lasted, Baldwin might join the Northmen.

⁷ Meyer Annales Flandriæ, 13. For the same purpose, Theodore was made the first count of Holland at this time, ib.

⁸ The author of the Life of S. Winnoc, written in the eleventh century, says, Flanders never had a man his superior in talent and warlike ability, 7 Bouquet, p. 379.

⁹ Annales Bertiniani. One expression of these annals is curious: it says, that the Northmen divided themselves, secundum suas sodalitates, as if they had been an union of different companies associated for the expedition.

¹⁰ Ob tam furibundas septentrionalium barbarorum incursiones Flandri in suis pagis castellis que munitiones facere ceperunt. Meyer. Ann. Fland. 12.

ravages, they broke from their camp at night, and ravaged all the east of the county. Ethelbert was, like his brother, taken off prematurely, after a short but honourable reign of six years, and was buried in Shireburn.¹¹ He left some children,¹² but Ethelred, his brother, acceded in their stead.

866.

During the reigns of his brethren, Alfred was quietly advancing into youth and manhood. When an illustrious character excites our attention, it is natural to inquire whether any unusual circumstances distinguished his early years. This curiosity arises, not from the expectation of beholding an extraordinary being, acting to astonish us in the features and dress of infancy, because it is probable, that in the beginning of life no indications of future greatness appear. Healthy children are in general sprightly; and the man destined to interest ages by his matured intellect, cannot be distinguished amid the universal animation and activity of his delighted play-fellows. But as the evolution of genius, and its luxuriant fertility depend much upon the accidents of its experience, it becomes important to notice the events which have occurred to an illustrious individual, during the first periods of life, because they usually produce or determine the tendencies of his character, and materially influence his future fortunes.

Alfred's
youth and
education.

The first years of Alfred's life were marked by incidents unusual to youth. When he was but four years old, he was sent by his father to travel by land through France and over the Alps to Rome, accompanied with a large retinue. He was brought back in safety from this journey; and in his seventh year he attended his father in a similar expedition. Although Alfred at these periods was but a child, yet the varied successions of scenes and incidents with which these journies must have abounded, could not occur to his perception without powerfully exciting and instructing his young intellect.

¹¹ Asser, 14.

¹² They are mentioned in Alfred's will. About this time, Ruric, a prince of the Waregi, obtained the empire of Russia, and

fixing his seat at Novogardia, which he adorned with buildings, occasioned all Russia to have that name. Chronicon Theod. Kiow, cited by Langb. 1. p. 554.

His residence twice at Rome, in which so many monuments of ancient art were then visible to rouse the enthusiasm and interest the curiosity of the observer, must have left impressions on his mind, that could never forsake it, of the superiority and civilization of the people, whose celebrity was every where resounded, and whose noble works he was contemplating.¹³ The survey of the ruins of the Capitol has excited some to the arduous toil of literary composition,¹⁴ and may have produced in the mind of Alfred that ambitious eagerness for knowledge which so usefully distinguished his maturer years.

In his eighth year a new train of associations must have been created by his residence in the court of France, during his father's courtship and marriage with Judith. An urbanity of manners, and a cultivation of knowledge, distinguished the Franks from the other Gothic nations. Alfred must have been inspired with some emulation, some desire of improvement, though the occupations of his father confined his wishes to a latent sentiment.

From his eighth year to his twelfth, his biography is less certain. If it be true, as some chronicles intimate, that infirm health occasioned his father, in obedience to the superstition of the day, to send him to Modwenna, a religious lady in Ireland, celebrated into sanctity,¹⁵ such an expedition must, by its new scenes, have kept his curiosity alive, and have amplified his information.

But though Alfred's mind may have abounded with excited capability, eager to know, and emulous of distinction,¹⁶ it had

¹³ Besides the remains of ancient taste, Alfred must have seen there the most perfect productions of the time, as the pope was perpetually receiving a great variety of rich presents from Constantinople and every other Christian country. See many of these mentioned in Anastasius.

¹⁴ Mr. Gibbon mentions that he conceived the first idea of writing his history while sitting on the ruins of the Capitol.

¹⁵ Hist. aurea Johan. Tinmuth, MSS. in Bib. Bodl. cited by Dugdale Monast. 1. p. 197. Higden also mentions it, p. 256.

¹⁶ Asser says of him, cui ab incunabulis ante omnia et cum omnibus presentis vitæ studiis, sapientiæ desiderium cum nobilitate generis, nobilis mentis ingenium supplevit, p. 16.

received none of that fruitful cultivation which is gained in literary education, from the transmitted wisdom of other times; from the unobtrusive eloquence of books. Alfred had been a favourite; and of such unfortunate children, indulgences and ignorance are too often the lot. Happily, his father's misfortunes and new connection rescued him from that ruin of temper and mind which sometimes disappoints the fairest promises of nature.

The kindling energy of Alfred's intellect displayed itself in a fondness for the only mental object which then existed to attract it. This was the Anglo-Saxon poetry. The Saxon Muses were neither graceful nor polished. Like their wooers and their models, they seem to us, who have gazed on the exquisite figures of immortal Greece, rude and uncourtly, if not disgusting. But after the utter darkness of midnight, the faintest dawn is pleasant; amid ferocious savages, the minutest trait of sympathy is precious. So to Alfred the Saxon poems, whatever was their character, were impressive and delightful. By day and by night, he was an assiduous auditor whenever they were recited.¹⁷ He listened to retain, and he retained, to desire larger draughts of that intellectual fountain whose casual droppings were so sweet.

But the talisman of language conceals knowledge from the uninitiated, and the mysteries of the alphabet must be mastered before the treasures of science can be possessed. Alfred had not acquired it, and was indebted for the attainment to his step-mother, Judith. When Alfred was twelve years old, she was sitting one day, surrounded by her family, with a book of Saxon poetry in her hands. As Aldhelm and Cedmon had written poems of great popularity, it may have contained some of theirs. That she was able to read is not surprising, because she was a Franc, and the Franks were beyond the Anglo-Saxons in literary pursuits. With a happy judgment she proposed it as a gift to him who would the

¹⁷ Asser, p. 16.

soonest learn to read it. The whole incident may have been chance play, but it was fruitful of consequences. The elder princes thought the reward inadequate to the task, and retired from the field of emulation. But the mind of Alfred, captivated by the prospect of information, and pleased with the beauty of the writing, inquired if she actually intended to give it to the person who would the soonest learn it. His mother repeating the promise with a smile of joy at the question, he took the book, found out an instructor, and learnt to read it. When his industry had crowned his wishes with success, he recited it to her.¹⁸

Religion continued the stimulus which the pleasures of poetry had first created. He made a collection of the devout offices for the day, with prayers and psalms, adapted to pious meditation; and he always carried this treasure in his bosom, for perpetual use.¹⁹

But in learning to read Saxon, Alfred had only entered the anti-room of knowledge. The Saxon language was not at that day the repository of literature. The learned of the Anglo-Saxons, Bede, Alcuin, and others, had written their useful works in Latin, and translations of the classics had not then been thought of. Alfred's first acquisition was therefore of a nature which rather augmented his own conviction of his ignorance, than supplied him with the treasures which he coveted. He had yet to master the language of ancient Rome, before he could become acquainted with the compositions which contained all the facts of history, the elegance of poetry, and the disquisitions of philosophy. He knew where these invaluable riches lay, but he was unable to appropriate them to his improvement. We are told that it was one of his greatest lamentations, and, as he conceived, among his severest misfortunes, that when he had youth and leisure, and permission to learn, he could not find teachers. No good masters, capable of initiating him in that language in which the minds he revered

¹⁸ Asser, 17.¹⁹ Asser, 16.

had conversed and written, were at that time to be found in all the kingdom of Wessex.²⁰

CHAP.
VIII.

His love for knowledge made him neither effeminate nor slothful. The robust labours of the chase ingrossed a large portion of his leisure; and he is panegyricized for his incomparable skill and felicity in this rural art.²¹ To Alfred, whose life was indispensably a life of great warlike exertion, the exercise of hunting may have been salutary and even needful. Perhaps his commercial and polished posterity may wisely permit amusements more philanthropic, to diminish their attachment to this dubious pursuit.

He followed the labours of the chase as far as Cornwall.²² His fondness for this practice is a striking proof of his activity of disposition, because he appears to have been afflicted with a disease which would have sanctioned indolence in a person less alert. But his life and actions shew, that, though a dreadful malady haunted him incessantly with tormenting agony, nothing could suppress his unwearied and inextinguishable genius. Though environed with difficulties which would have shipwrecked any other man, he spurned at the opposing storm; he even mastered the raging whirlwind, and made it waft him to virtue and to fame.

For a while we must leave Alfred aspiring to become the student, to trace the origin of that storm of desolation and ferocious war, which was collecting from the North to intercept the progress, and disturb the happiness of the future king; and to lay waste the whole island, with havock the most sanguinary, and ruin the most permanent.

²⁰ Asser, 17.

²¹ Asser, 16. Though men fond of literature have not often excelled in the robust exercises, yet some remarkable characters have been distinguished for corporal agility. Thus the great Pythagoras was a successful boxer in the Olympic games; the first who

boxed according to art. Ceanthes the Stoic was a similar adept. His scholar, Chrysippus, the acutest of the Stoics, was at first a racer; and even Plato himself was a wrestler at the Isthmian and Pythian games. Bentley on Phalaris, 51—54.

²² Asser, 40. Flor. Wig. 309.

HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK III.

CHAP. I.

*The Political State of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark,
in the Eighth Century.*

ALTHOUGH popular language, seldom accurate, has given the denomination of Danes, to the invaders of England, they were composed of the nations who lived in the regions now known by the general appellations of Sweden and Norway, as well as of the inhabitants of Zealand and Jutland. Of these, the Swedes were the earliest civilized, and seem to have first abandoned the system of maritime piracy. The Norwegians continued their aggressions, though at long intervals, to the year wherein this history ends. The Danes, who headed the most terrible of the invasions, were also the most successful. Under Sweyn, Canute, and his children, they obtained the government of the country.

The general aspect of the North in the eighth century was remarkable for two peculiarities, which were fitted to produce an age of piracy. These were, the numerous petty kings who ruled in its various regions, and the sea kings who swarmed upon the ocean.

CHAP.
I.

BOOK
III.State of
Norway.

Norway, whose broken coast stretches along a tumultuous ocean, from the rocks of the Baltic into the Arctic circle, was the most sterile of all the regions of the North. Its rugged mountains, and intolerable cold, were unfriendly to agricultural cultivation; but they nurtured a hardy and vigorous race, who, possessing no luxuries, feared no invasion, but poured their fleets on other coasts, to seize the superfluities which happier climates produced.¹ The navigator whom Alfred consulted and employed, describes this region, which he calls Northmanna land, as very long and very small. "All that man may use for pasture or plough lieth against the sea; and even this is in some places very rocky. Wild moors lie against the east, and along the inhabited lands. In these moors the finnas dwell. The cultivated land is broadest towards the east, but becomes continually smaller as it stretches towards the north."² Ohthere added, that the "moors were in some places so broad, that a man would be two weeks in travelling over them; in others but six days."³

From these descriptions we may remark, that the natural state of the country favoured maritime depredations. The population was along the sea. The natives were hardy, and their subsistence scanty. Compelled by their penury, they roamed largely abroad, and returned, when plunder had enriched them.⁴

Norway, in the eighth century, was divided among numerous sovereignties, called fylki, which an Icelandic Saga defines to have been a province which could furnish twelve ships, containing each sixty or seventy well armed men.⁵

¹ Adam Bremen. *Historia Ecclesiastica*, l. iv. c. 96. p. 71. ed. Lindenbrog. Franc. 1630.

² See Ohthere's narration, inserted by Alfred in his Saxon translation of Orosius, p. 24. ed. Barrington, Lond. 1773. The land subjected to human culture, he describes as about 60 miles broad in the eastward, about 30 in the middle, and north-

ward, where smallest, it might be three miles to the moors. *Ib.*

³ Ohthere, *ib.*

⁴ Adam Brem. p. 71.

⁵ Olaf Tryggva-son's Saga, c. 41, cited in the commentary to *Ara Frode*, p. 97. ed. Oxon. 1716. Stephanius says, that the ancient Danes used the word fylki to signify a province now called Lœn; but so populous

Sometimes every fylki had an independent king. Sometimes more than one were under the same ruler.⁶ The chorographical description of Norway enumerates twenty-two of these fylki, besides the fylki of Trondheim, which contained eight more.⁷ The number of sovereignties probably varied according to the ambition and success of the several chiefs. The *Hervarar Saga* mentions, that at one period there were twelve kingdoms in Norway.⁸ In the ninth century they were very numerous. Snorre, the very ancient and most valuable historiographer of Norway,⁹ brings all the Fylki kings to our view, in his history of Harald Harfragre, the descendant of a petty prince in the southern parts of Scandinavia, who acceded in 862.¹⁰ Harald swore to subdue all these little sovereigns, as Gormo had already conquered those of Denmark, and Eric those of Sweden. He accomplished his vow. By his first efforts he destroyed the kings who governed in the eight fylki of Thronheim, and reduced these fylki under his dominion.¹¹ The rest of his life was chiefly occupied by his wars with the other. The struggle ended in his uniting them all under one monarchy.¹²

Skirted by the Alps of Norway, Sweden was distinguished for its fertility, wealth, and commerce.¹³ Its population was

State of
Sweden..

as to furnish an army. In each of these a sovereign governed. Note in Saxon. Gram. p. 118. ed. Hafn. 1644.

⁶ Olaf's Saga, p. 97.

⁷ Stephanius recapitulates them, p. 118.

⁸ C. 18. p. 221. This Saga, whose author is unknown, is a kind of Icelandic Epopea. The original was published with a vernacular translation and Latin notes, by Verelius, in 1672. The last edition is valuable for its Latin version; but it has omitted, I think, with a diminution of its utility, and with injustice to Verelius, his learned notes. Some might have been retrenched, but surely the great body of them ought not to have been characterized as "non momentosæ."

⁹ Snorre Sturleson was born at Hvam, in West Iceland, 1178. In 1213 he was made Supreme Judge of Iceland. He was a poet as well as an historian. His moral character

was not so distinguished as his genius. He was killed at Reickholt, in his sixty-third year. See his life, prefixed to Schöning's edition of his *Heimskringla*, or *Historia Regum Norvegicorum*. Havn. 1777.

¹⁰ *Annales Islandici vetustissimi*, 2 Langbeck's Script. Dan. p. 186.

¹¹ Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, c. 8. p. 81.

¹² See Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, p. 83—112. The last chapters of the *Ynglinga Saga* are on the immediate ancestors of Harald, who sprang from the Ynglingi of Upsal.

¹³ Adam Brem. 68. Rembert, who obtained the archbishopric of Hamburg in 865, has left us some valuable expressions about Birca, which he calls the port of Sweden. He says, *Ibi multa essent negotiatores divites et abundantia totius boni atque pecunia thesaurorum multa*. Vita Ansgar. 1 Langb. 459.

numerous, warlike, and hospitable.¹⁴ The name of Sweden, though now applied to the whole region governed by the Swedish monarch, was in ancient times restricted to the territory about Upsal.¹⁵ Before the eighth century, it contained many provincial sovereigns, called Herads Konungr, of whom the king of Upsal was the chief. As cultivation spread, and deserts were converted into fields, new kingdoms rose.¹⁶ Nineteen of these puny kingdoms are enumerated.¹⁷ The king of Upsal, subjecting these inferior rulers, received the denomination of Thiod Kongr.¹⁸ Ingialld, who perished in the invasion of Ivar Vidfadne, destroyed by treachery twelve of the petty kings.¹⁹ The king of Upsal received tribute from the rest, who were thence denominated Skatte Kongar, tributary kings.²⁰ But these subordinate rulers sometimes amassed so much wealth by piracy, as to be more powerful than the superior lord.²¹ Sweden had not a very extensive population, till after the beginning of the eighth century: in the preceding age it was so full of woods and deserts, that it required many days journey to pass over them. The father of Ingialld exerted himself to convert many forests and heaths into arable land.²² He made roads through parts which no human foot had explored, and, by his wise industry, great extents of country were adorned for the first time by the cottages, corn, and people of a flourishing cultivation.²³ This continent was,

¹⁴ Adam Brem. p. 68. He says, the Swedes not only thought it a disgrace to refuse hospitality to the traveller, but they contended for the honour of entertaining him. Ib. The Swedes had as many wives as they could maintain. Ib.

¹⁵ Snorre calls this part Swithiod. He places here the Ynglingi, whose succession Ivar Vidfadne disturbed. Adam Brem. also distinguishes Suedia from the adjoining provinces of Gothland, p. 68.

¹⁶ Snorre, Ynglinga Saga, c. 40. p. 48.

¹⁷ Messenii Scand. Illust. i. p. 7.

¹⁸ Verelius in Got. et Rol. p. 87. I observe in Snorre, that the ancient title of the kings of Sweden was Drottnar, (Lord). Dyggvi was first saluted Konungur (King)

c. 20. p. 24. His mother was the daughter of Dan the Magnificent, a quo daniae ortum est nomen. Ib. Snorre says, the Swedes call him their drottinn, who takes the skattgiafr, the tribute from them, c. 11. p. 15.

¹⁹ Snorre, Yngl. c. 43. p. 53.

²⁰ Peringskiold Monum. Upl. 10. He calls the kings of Upsal Enwalds, or Ofwer Konungar. The arms of Upland were a golden apple, or globe, surrounded with a belt, in allusion to the monarchy. Ib.

²¹ Verelius Got. et Rol. 75.

²² Snorre, Ynglinga Saga, c. 37. p. 45.

²³ Snorre, p. 45. Loccenius, with truer chronology than others, places Aunund immediately before the father of Ragnar Lodbrog. Hist. Suec. p. 41.

however, still so little peopled, that Olaf, the son of Ingialld, flying from Ivar, in the eighth century, found the country from the west of the kingdom of Upsal, to the Vener lake, an uninhabited forest. By the axe and by fire, he cleared the regions about the river, which runs into the lake; and the province and kingdom of Vermaland, under his auspices arose.²⁴ It was not until the ninth century, that Jamtia and Helsingia, the two northern provinces of Sweden, received a permanent colony. Men flying from the tyranny of the preponderant sovereign, levelled the woods, and spread themselves over the district.²⁵ It seems to have been general throughout the North, that the interior parts of every country were wild solitudes. The sea coasts were peopled; but as the natives undervalued agriculture, the adventurous spirits plunged into piracy, and the rest, addicted to hunting and pasturage, made few efforts to remove the frightful forests and extensive marshes which every where forbade their occupation.²⁶ Sweden was for a long time a favourite prey to the pirates of Denmark and the Baltic.²⁷ In the eighth century, the Upsal kingdom was conquered by Ivar Vidfadme, the little potentate of Scania, whose father was one of the chiefs destroyed by Ingialld.²⁸ Upsal afterwards continued to increase in its power and preponderance.

The country of the Danes was composed of islands, which an unquiet ocean separated, and of the peninsula Jutland, which is almost insulated by its numerous bays. Of the Danish islands, Fionia was remarkable for its Odinsee, the place in Denmark to which Odin went out of Saxony, after his reputed emigration from the Tanais.²⁹ It became a great

State of
Denmark.

²⁴ Snorre Yng. c. 46. p. 55.

²⁵ Snorre gives the history of these colonizations in his Saga Hakonar Goda, c. 14. p. 137. Verelius cites the Olaf Saga on the same fact, in Goth. et Rolf. p. 15.

²⁶ Verelius, Goth. et Rolf. 13. Hence the Snerris-Saga says, that travelling was very difficult, because on the melting of the ice and

snows upon the rivers and lakes, the road must then be taken through pools, marshes, and trackless woods. Verel. ib. p. 14.

²⁷ Snorre, p. 43, 44.

²⁸ Ib. p. 53.

²⁹ Ib. p. 9. Odins-ey means Odin's island. Odin afterwards moved into Sweden, built a temple, and founded a city at Sigtun. Ib.

city. The island was very fertile, but its coasts were full of pirates.³⁰

Zealand was distinguished amidst the other isles for its magnitude, and its ancient metropolis, Lethra, whose sovereign was superior to the other kings who governed in the various provinces of the Danes.³¹ Jutland, which extended from the Angles to the Sound, constituted a principal part of the Danish strength. Its soil was sterile, but the country upon the rivers was cultivated, and the most frequented cities were on the arms of the sea, which ran into it. The rest was made up of vast solitudes and briny marshes, like all the North in this savage and calamitous period. It abounded with uninhabited forests, which concurred with the fens to keep the interior unpeopled. Hence the maritime coasts, though full of incessant danger, from the pirates, were the parts frequented.³²

The Danes also occupied Scania, on the Scandinavian continent. It was their richest province.³³ This peninsula was almost an island; a tract of land, composed of deep forests

He is usually placed before the Christian æra; but the Saxon Genealogies make him above 200 or 300 years more recent. These are entitled to much notice, because the Saxon annals are far more accurate and precise than the Northern. They were also committed much earlier to writing. These make Cerdic, in 495, the ninth descendant from Odin, (Sax. Chr. 15.) Ida, in 547, the tenth, (Ib. 19.) Ella, in 560, the eleventh, (p. 20.) If we reckon each generation at twenty-five years, as a fair average, then, according to Cerdic's genealogy, Odin will be placed 270 after Christ; according to Ida's 290, A. C.; according to Ella's 285, A. C. This position of Odin, by the Saxon chroniclers, has sometimes suggested to me the probability, that Odin's famous emigration from the Euxine, was no other than the daring voyage of the Franks from the Euxine, which occurred between 270 and 280, A. C. and which is stated in the first volume of this history, p. 52. It is a coincidence, that Snorre places his first conquests in Saxony; for the Franks landed

about Frisia, and immediately after that the sea was covered with Frankish and Saxon pirates. Odin is also said by the Northern traditions to have fled from the Romans; but no other flight than the Frankish voyage is noticed by the Latin writers. The Saxon piracies show, that the Frankish voyage gave a new impulse to society in the North.

³⁰ Adam Brem. 64.

³¹ On Lethra and its topography see Stephanus in Sax. p. 74. It was in the middle of the island, not far from Roschild. Sveno, who lived in 1186, says, that this famous city had in his time so declined, that inter abjectissima ferme vix colitur. Hist. reg. Dan. 1 Langb. 45. Roschild became afterwards the metropolis.

³² Adam Brem. 63. Jutland was anciently called Reidgotaland. Torfæus, Series Reg. Dan. 86, 87. The rest of Denmark was called Ey-gotaland, the insular Gothland. Ib. 83. 87.

³³ Knytlinga Saga. Worm. Mon. Dan. App. p. 35.

and rugged mountains, divided it from Gothland.³⁴ It produced Ivar, the king whose invasion destroyed the dynasty of the Ynglingi at Upsal, and who occupied part of England.³⁵ Saxo mentions Hallandia and Blekingia as Danish possessions.³⁶

Wulfstan, a navigator with whom Alfred conversed about the north-eastern countries of the Baltic, enumerated the isles of Langoland, Leland, Falster and Sconey, as belonging at that period to Denemearca.³⁷ The German chronicles at this time generally mean Jutland when they speak of Denmark, but the isles seem to have always formed an important part of the Danish population.³⁸

Denmark was anciently possessed by many contemporary kings. The Knytlinga Saga, after enumerating the districts which Denmark contained in the time of Canute, adds, that although then under one sovereign, they had been formerly divided into many kingdoms.³⁹ According to this document, Jutland contained five of these Konga-ryki, at Sleswick, Ripen, Arhusen, Wiborg, and Hording.⁴⁰ The islands, and the continental provinces of Scania and Hallandia, had also their respective sovereigns, among whom the king of Lethra appears the most ancient and the most powerful.⁴¹ These petty kings were styled Fylki Kongr, people, or provincial kings.⁴² Ambition, before the eighth century, had diminished

³⁴ Adam 64. In his time it had become very opulent.

³⁵ Snorre, p. 53, 54.

³⁶ In his preface, he mentions the rock in Blekingia, so famous for its surprising inscriptions. He says, l. 7. p. 138, Harald Hyldetand, as a monument to his father, caused his actions to be described on it. Wormius relates what remains of it. Monum. Dan. p. 221.

³⁷ Alfred's Orosius, p. 25.

³⁸ They were anciently called Witahedh, or Vitaslett. Verelius, Hist. Suio-Goth. 16. Peter Olaus says, that the name Dania primo et principaliter, comprehended the islands. Chron. 1. Langb. 83.

³⁹ Knytlinga Saga. Wormius, App. 36.

⁴⁰ In Canute's time the proportionate importance of these provinces may be inferred from the war ships they furnished to the king. Heida bay, containing 350 kyrckna or parishes, provided 130 ships. Ripen, 324 parishes, 110 or 120 ships. Arhusen, 210 parishes, 90 ships. Wiburg, 250 parishes, 100 ships. Hording, 160 parishes, 50 ships. Fionia, 300 parishes, 100 ships. Zealand, 309 churches, 120 ships. Scania, 353 churches, 150 ships. Worm. p. 34, 35.

⁴¹ Snorre generally calls the Danish kings, kings of Hleidra, as p. 9. 17. 41. 43, &c. Stephanus says, ab hac Lethra Daniae reges in antiquissimis monumentis semper nominantur Kongar aff Ledru, p. 74.

⁴² Stephan. p. 103. Verelius informs us,

the number of the rival thrones. Two monopolized Jutland; Fionia, Seeland, and Scania, had each another.⁴³ This number also lessened; and at the period of their first aggression on England, the Danish royalty was confined to a king in Jutland, and one over the Isles. Soon afterwards one monarcha commanded the whole. Gormo Grandævus, who lived in the end of the ninth century, is stated to have destroyed the other reguli.⁴⁴

In speaking of kings and kingdoms, we use words of swelling sound, and magnificent import. Splendour, extensive dominion, pomp, power, and venerated dignity, are the majestic images which arise in our minds when we hear of thrones. But we must dismiss from our thoughts the fascinating appendages to modern royalty, when we contemplate the petty sovereigns of the North. Some of their kingdoms may have equalled an English county in extent, but many would have been rivalled by our hundreds. Seated in their rural halls, with a small band of followers scattered about, these Northern fylki kings were often victims to pirates who assailed them. They had neither castles, cities, nor defensive fortifications.⁴⁵ Even the Thiod-Kongr, the preponderant ruler, sometimes fell before one of his inferiors whom plunder had enriched.⁴⁶

that fylking is an embodied army, fylke a province furnishing a fylking, and fylke king its sovereign. In Got. et Rol. p. 27.

⁴³ Anon. Roskild. Chron. 1 Langb. 374. To the same purpose Stephanius, p. 103.

⁴⁴ Torfæus Hist. Norv. 1. p. 410. Snorre intimates as much. Harald's Saga, c. 3. p. 78.

⁴⁵ We have a remarkable instance of this in Birca, the port and chief commercial

emporium of Sweden. Rembert, who lived about 865, states this Birca to have been so defenceless, that on the approach of the Danes, the people fled from it to a neighbouring civitatem. This civitas was also non multum firma. They offered 120 pounds of silver to save Birca. Ansch. vita, p. 460. 1 Langb.

⁴⁶ Verelius in Hervarar Saga, 142.

CHAP. II.

The Sea Kings and Vikingr of the North.

WHEN we review these kings and sub-kings of the North, we behold only a part of its political situation. There were also sovereigns who possessed neither country nor regular subjects, and yet filled the regions adjacent with blood and misery. The sea kings of the North were a race of beings whom Europe beheld with horror. Without a yard of territorial property, without any towns, or visible nation,¹ with no wealth but their ships, no force but their crews, and no hope but from their swords, the sea kings swarmed upon the boisterous ocean, and plundered in every district they could approach. Never to sleep under a smoky roof, nor to indulge in the cheerful cup over a hearth,² were the boasts of these watery sovereigns, who not only flourished in the plunder of the sea and its shores, but who sometimes amassed so much booty, and enlisted so many followers, as to be able to assault provinces for permanent conquest. Thus Haki and Hagbard were sea kings; their reputation induced many bands of rovers to join their fortunes. They attacked the king of Upsal, whom Haki defeated and succeeded.³ Some years afterwards, the sons of Yngvi, who had become sea kings, and lived wholly in their war ships, roamed the ocean in search of adventures. They encountered the king of Haley-ia, and hanged him. They also assaulted Haki, and overpowered

CHAP.
II.

The Sea
Kings.

¹ Multi enim reges hinc fuere maritimi (Sæ-konungar) qui maximis quidem copiis sed nulli præerant regioni. Snorre, Yngl. Saga, c. 34. p. 43. Multi insuper qui nec ditiones nec subditos habebant sed piratica

tantum et latrociniiis opes quærebant, Wiik-kungar et Naak-kungar, i. e. reges maritimi dicebantur. Verelius, Hist. Suio-Gott. p. 6.

² Snorre, p. 43.

³ Snorre, Yngling. c. 25. p. 30, 31.

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him.⁴ Solvi was a sea king, and infested the eastern regions of the Baltic with his depredations. He suddenly landed in Sweden in the night, surrounded the house where the king of Upsal was sleeping, and, applying firebrands, reduced all who were in it to ashes.⁵ Such was the generous warfare of these royal pirates.

It is declared to have been a law or custom in the North, that one of the male children should be selected to remain at home, to inherit the government. The rest were exiled to the ocean, to wield their sceptres amid the turbulent waters.⁶ The consent of the Northern societies entitled all men of royal descent, who assumed piracy as a profession, to enjoy the name of kings, though they possessed no territory.⁷ Hence the sea kings were the kinsmen of the land sovereigns. While the eldest son ascended the paternal throne, the rest of the family hastened, like petty Neptunes, to establish their kingdoms in the waves;⁸ and, if any of the fylki-kongr, or thiod-kongr, were expelled their inheritance by others, they also sought a continuance of their dignity upon the ocean.⁹ When the younger branches of a reigning dynasty were about to become sea kings, the ships and their requisite equipments were furnished as a patrimonial right, and perhaps as a political convenience.

When we recollect the numerous potentates of Scandinavia, and their general fecundity, we may expect that the ocean swarmed with sea kings. Such was their number, that one Danish sovereign is mentioned by Saxo to have destroyed

⁴ Snorre, p. 31, 32. The practice of hanging the chief they overpowered, seems to have furnished their scalds with some gloomy wit. One of them calls the tree from which the king was suspended, *the horse of Sigar*. Ib. 31.

⁵ Snorre, p. 43.

⁶ Mæssenius Scand. 1. p. 4. And see Wallingford, 533.

⁷ Olaf. Trygg. Saga ap. Bartholin. antiq. Dan. 446. Snorre has given a particular instance of this. Saga af Olafi, Hinom.

Helga, c. 4. Wormius recognizes the same custom. Mon. Dan. 269.

⁸ See Verelius, Hist. Suio-G. p. 6. Pontanus, Hist. Dan. p. 87. Stephanus in Sax. p. 152. Thus a grandson of the famous Ragnar Lodbrog was a sea king, while his brother succeeded to the crown of Sweden. Filii Biornis jarnsidæ fuere Eirikus et Refillus, hic erat Herkongr oc Sækongr. Her-varar Saga, 225.

⁹ Thus Gudrum: ab eo regno pulsus piratico more vixit, 1 Langb. 480. Thus also Biorn, 2. l. 10. 89.

seventy of the honourable but direful race.¹⁰ Their rank and successes always secured to them abundant crews, and the mischief they perpetrated must have been immense.¹¹ These sea kings were also called Her-kongr.

The sea kings had the name of honour, but they were only a portion of those pirates, or vikingr, who in the ninth century were covering the ocean. Not only the children of the kings, but every man of importance equipped ships, and roamed the seas to acquire property by force.¹² At the age of twelve, the sons of the great were in action under military tutors.¹³ Piracy was not only the most honourable occupation, and the best harvest of wealth, it was not only consecrated to public emulation by the illustrious who pursued it,¹⁴ but no one was esteemed noble, no one was respected, who did not return in the winter to his home with ships laden with booty.¹⁵ The spoil consisted of every necessary of life, clothes, domestic utensils, cattle, which they killed and prepared on the shores they ravaged, slaves, and other property.¹⁶ It is not surprising that while this spirit prevailed, every country abounded in deserts.

Northern
piracy.

¹⁰ Saxo Gram. l. 7. p. 142.

¹¹ Snorre has recorded the sufferings of Sweden in his Ynglinga Saga; and the famous inscription on the lapis Tirstedensis, given by Wormius, Monum. 267, and commented on by Bartholin, 438, records the memory of Frotho, a Vikingr terrible to the Swedes, 443. The ancient Svenio Aggonis mentions the extensive depredations of Helghi, a rex maris, Hist. Dan. 1 Langb. 44. And the Nornagesti Historia in one instance exhibits a volume of such incidents. "Hi regulos permultos subjugaverant, pugnatōres fortissimos interfecerant, urbesque incendio deleverant ac in Hispania et Gallia immensam stragem ediderant." Ap. Torfæus, Series Reg. Dan. 384.

¹² Snorre, Saga, Olafi Helga, c. 192. p. 315.

¹³ Snorre furnishes us with a fact of this kind: "quo tempore primum navem bellicam adscendit Olafus Haraldī filius XII annos natus erat." His mother appointed Ranius,

who had been his foster father, and had been often in warlike expeditions, the commander of the forces, atque Olafi curatorem. Saga, af. Olafi Helga, c. 2. p. 3.

¹⁴ The northern writers attest the *glory* which accompanied piracy. See Bartholin, 437. Verelius in Hervarar Saga, 47. Wormius, Mon. Dan. 269. Bartholin quotes the Vatzdæla, which says, Mos erat magnorum virorum regum vel comitum, æqualium nostrorum, ut piraticæ incumberent, opes ac gloriam sibi acquirentes, p. 438.

¹⁵ Stephanus in Sax. p. 69.

¹⁶ Thus Eystein, king of Upsal, pirated in Vaurnia prædas ibi agit vestes, alias que res pretiosas nec non colonorum utensilia rapiens, pecoraque in littore mactans, quo facto domum reversi sunt. Snorre, Yngling. Saga, c. 51, p. 58. So Adils plundered in Saxland, and got many captives. Ib. c. 32. p. 40.

So reputable was the pursuit, that parents were even anxious to compel their children into the dangerous and malevolent occupation. It is asserted in an Icelandic Saga, that parents would not suffer the wealth they had gained by it to be inherited by their offspring. It is mentioned to have been their practice to command their gold, silver, and other property to be buried with them, that their offspring might be driven by necessity to engage in the conflicts, and to participate the glory of maritime piracy.¹⁷ Inherited property was despised. That affluence only was esteemed which danger had endeared.¹⁸ It was therefore well said of the Northmen by one of their contemporaries, that they sought their food by their sails, and *inhabited* the sea.¹⁹

Even the regular land kings addicted themselves to piracy.²⁰ It was the general amusement of their summer months: hence almost every king commemorated by Snorre is displayed as assaulting other provinces, or as suffering invasions in his own.²¹ With strange infatuation, the population of the day welcomed the successful vikingr with the loudest acclamations; although, from the prevalence of the practice, domestic misery became the general lot. The victors of one day were the victims in the next; and he who was consigning without pity the women and children of other families to the grave or to famine, must have often found on his return but the ashes of his paternal habitation, and the corpses of those he loved.

The name by which the pirates were at first distinguished was Vikingr, which perhaps originally meant kings of the bays.²² It was in bays that they ambushed, to dart upon the passing voyager. The recesses of the shores afforded them a station of safety as to the perils of the ocean, and of advantage as to their

¹⁷ Vatzdæla ap. Barth. 438. ¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nigellus, who lived about 826, has left a poem on the baptism of Harald, in which he says,

“Ipse quidem populus late pernotus habetur,
“Lintre dapes quærit, incolitatque mare.”

1 Langb. 400.

²⁰ Verel. in Got. et Rol. p. 75.

²¹ Yngl. c. 26. p. 31, 32. 40. Hence Snorre marks the autumn as the season of their return.

²² Wormius says, viig means a bay. Mon. Dan. 269; and Bartholin favours the derivation, 446.

pursuit. Our bolder navigation, which selects in preference the middle of the ocean, was then unusual. The ancient merchants coasted wherever they could, and therefore naturally frequented bays in the progress of their voyage. In hopes of prey, the bays were also full of pirates, ever ready to dart upon their object.²³

These fierce bands of robbers appear to have been kept in amity with each other by studied equality. It was a law, that the drinking vessel should pass round the whole crew, as they sat, with undistinguished regularity.²⁴ Their method of fighting was the offspring of their fearless courage; they lashed their ships together, and from the prows rushed to mutual battle.²⁵

The ferocity and useless cruelty of this race of beings almost transcend belief. The piracy of the vikings, who were also called hernadi,²⁶ was an exhibition of every species of barbarity. Besides the most savage food,²⁷ which, however, the Greenlanders of our times are stated to have used,²⁸ to tear the infant from the mother's breast, and to toss it on their lances from one to another,²⁹ is stated in several books to have been the custom of many of these pirates, from which, though at a late period, their civilizing chiefs at last alienated them. It was a consistency of character in such men to

²³ Wormius, 269. And see the dissertation annexed to the Gunnlaugi Saga, 303.

²⁴ Snorre, Yngl. Saga, c. 41. p. 50. This custom is stated to have prevailed among the predatory Britons; "circa modum cerevisiæ ordinatim in modum circuli, illud circumdando discubuerunt." Vita Cadoci, MSS. Cotton Library, Vesp. A. 14.

²⁵ Snorre, Haralld's Saga, c. 11. p. 85.

²⁶ These words were at first promiscuously used. The Brandkrossa thetti, and the Svarfdalensium historia, cited by the editors of the Gunnlaugi Saga, p. 305, evince that they had some difference of meaning, but I do not think we understand the distinction. They who are curious may read the dissertation above quoted, p. 305.

²⁷ See the Saga Gothrici et Rolfi, and also the Helgaquida of Sæmund, in Barthol. 456. One of the laws of Hialmar mentioned in the Orvar Oddz Sagu, was, ne crudam carnem comederent. Ib.

²⁸ The Greenlanders eat raw flesh, and drink the rein deer's hot blood. 2 Crantz, 28.

²⁹ This is stated by the English annalists, as Osbern, in his life of Elphegus, 2 Langb. p. 444. Matt. Westm. p. 388, and Henry of Huntingdon, l. 5. p. 347. After citing these, Bartholin records from the Landnamâ, the name of the man who abolished the horrid custom. The Landnamâ says, "Olverus Barnakall celebris incola Norvegiæ, validus fuit pirata, ille infantes ab unius hastæ mucrone in aliam projici, passus non est, quod

despise tears and mourning so much, that they would never weep for their deceased relations.³⁰

One branch of the vikingr is said to have cultivated paroxysms of brutal insanity, and they who experienced them were revered. These were the Berserkir,³¹ whom many authors describe. These men, when a conflict impended, or a great undertaking was to be commenced, abandoned all rationality upon system; they studied to resemble wolves or maddening dogs; they bit their shields; they howled like tremendous beasts;³² they threw off covering; they excited themselves to a strength which has been compared to that of bears, and then rushed to every crime and horror which the most frantic enthusiasm could perpetrate.³³ This fury was an artifice of battle like the Indian warwhoop. Its object was to intimidate the enemy. It is attested that the unnatural excitation was, as might be expected, always followed by a complete debility.³⁴ It was originally practised by Odin.³⁵ They who used it, often joined in companies.³⁶ The furor Berserkicus, as mind and morals improved, was at length felt to be horrible. It changed from a distinction to a reproach,³⁷ and was prohibited by penal laws.³⁸ The name at last became execrable.

piratis turc familiare erat; ideoque Barnakall (infantum præsidium vel multos habens infantes) cognominatus est. Bartholin, p. 457.

³⁰ Adam Brem. states this fact of the Danes, p. 64.

³¹ The Berserkir were at first honoured. The Hervarar Saga applies the name to the sons of Arngrim as a matter of reputation. Omnes magni Berserkir fuere, p. 15. Snorre, in mentioning one who fought with Harald Harfragre, calls him a berserkr mikill, a mighty Berserkir. Haralld's Saga, c. 19. p. 94. The scald Hornklofi says, fremuere Berserki, bellum eis erat circa præcordia, p. 95. In another place Snorre says, Haralld filled his ship with his attendants and berserkir; he says the station of the berserkir was near the prow, ib. p. 82; he mentions them also 69. It was in allusion to their ferocity, that the Harbarz lioth of Sæmund applies the name berserkir to signify giants. Edda Sæmundar, p. 107.

³² Hervar. Saga, p. 35. Saxo describes the berserkir fury minutely twice in his seventh book, p. 123, 124. Torfæus also, in Hrolfi kraka, p. 49. mentions them.

³³ Annotatio de Berserkir added to Kristni Saga, p. 142. See the Eyrbyggja Saga, ib. p. 143. So the Egills Saga. ap. Bartholin, p. 346.

³⁴ Hervarar Saga, p. 27. So the Egills Saga. Bartholin, p. 346.

³⁵ Snorre, Ynglinga, c. 6. p. 11. In the Havamal of Sæmund, Odin boasts of it as a magical trick. See the ode in Barthol. 347.

³⁶ So they appear in the Hervarar Saga.

³⁷ Thus the Vatzdæla. Thorus furore berserkico nonnunquam corripiebatur, quod in tali viro probrum ducebatur, neque enim illud ipsi gloriosum erat. Barthol. 345. This man is made to say of himself, that it disgraced him, and he asks advice how to overcome it. Ib. 346.

³⁸ The code of Icelandic law says, "furore

When we consider the calamities, which the course of nature every where mixes with the happiness of man, we should, from theory, expect a general union of sentiment and wisdom to mitigate the evils which none can avoid. Experience however shows our species to have been engaged at all times, in exasperating every natural affliction, by the addition of those which human agency can create. History displays mankind always attacking each other, without the provocation of personal injury. If civilization, science, and Christianity have not allayed the spirit of political ambition, nor subdued the love of warlike glory, we cannot be surprized that the untaught Northmen delighted in the depredations to which they were educated, from which they derived honour, and by which they subsisted. Pity and benevolence are the children of our disciplined reason and augmented felicity. They are little known to our species in those ages, when general misery licenses and produces the most tyrannical selfishness. Hence the berserkir, the vikingr, or the sea king, felt no remorse at the sight of human wretchedness. Familiar with misery from their infancy, taught to value peaceful society but as a rich harvest easier to be pillaged, knowing no glory but from the destruction of their fellow-creatures, all their habits, all their feelings, all their reasonings were ferocious; they sailed from country to country, to desolate its agriculture, and not merely to plunder, but to murder or enslave its inhabitants. Thus they landed in Gothia. The natives endeavoured to escape. The invaders pursued with the flame and sword.³⁹ Thus in Sweden, part of the inhabitants they massacre, and part they make captive; but the fields were ravaged far and wide with fire.⁴⁰ The same miseries proclaimed their triumphs in Wendila. The flame and sword were unsparing assailants,

berserkico si quis grassetur, relegatione puniatur." Ann. Kristni Saga, p. 142. So the Grettis Saga mentions of Eric the earl of

Norway, omnes berserkos Norvegia exulare jussit, ib. 142.

³⁹ Snorre, Ynglinga Saga, c. 21. p. 24.

⁴⁰ Snorre, c. 31. p. 39.

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and villages were converted into uninhabited deserts.⁴¹ Thus at Paris, they impaled 111 of their captives, crucified many others on houses and trees, and slew numbers in the villages and fields.⁴² In war they seemed to have reckoned cruelty a circumstance of triumph; for the sea king and the vikingr even hung the chiefs of their own order on their defeat.⁴³ But this article need not be extended. In our own island we shall soon have to record and to detail their fury.

⁴¹ Snorre, c. 31. p. 39.

⁴² Du Chesne, Hist. Francorum Script. Snorre, p. 31, 33, 44, &c. also in the Her-
varar Saga, and others.

⁴³ There are many instances of this in

CHAP. III.

The first Aggression of the Northmen on the Anglo-Saxons.

SUCH was the dismal state of society in the North. For a long time the miseries of this system were limited to the Baltic. After the colonization of England had freed the Germanic and British ocean from Saxon piracy, Europe was blessed with almost three centuries of tranquillity. One Danish rover is stated to have wandered to the Maese in the beginning of the sixth century; but the enterprise was unfortunate. It is not clear that it was imitated; at least, after this century,² we hear no more of Danes for above two hundred years.

But some of the historians of the North pretend that the Danes visited England and Europe in a much earlier period than our chronicles allow.

Saxo Grammaticus, who died 1204,³ has left us a history which has delighted both taste and learning,⁴ by its elegance and vigour; and which, considering his age and country, is surprising for its power of composition. He conducts the Danes into Britain long before the Christian æra. According

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¹ Gregory of Tours, who lived in 573, the oldest author extant who mentions the Danes, narrates this expedition, l. 3. c. 3. p. 53. Corpus Franc. Hist. ed. Hanov. 1613.

² The manner in which Venantius Fortunatus, who lived 565, mentions them, implies some little activity and notoriety in these people at that time. To Chilperic he says,

Quem Geta Wasco tremunt, Danus, Scythæ,
Saxo, Britannus,

Cum patre quos pridem te domitasse patet.

L. 8. c. 1. p. 822.

To the Dux Lupus he says,

Quam tibi sis firmus cum prosperitate superna,

Saxonis et Dani gens cito vita probat.

Borda a quo fluvius sinuoso gurgite currit,

Hic adversa acies, te duce, cæsa ruit.

L. 6. p. 810. Bib. Mag. Pat. T. 8.

³ Stephan. prolog. p. 22.

⁴ Erasmus has honoured Saxo with a panegyric which every historian must covet; qui suæ gentis historiam splendide magnificeque contexuit. Probo vividum et ardens ingenium, orationem nusquam remissam aut

to his narration, Frotho the first, his ninth king of Denmark,⁵ Amleth, whose memory our Shakespeare has preserved,⁶ Fridlevus, the twenty-third king of Saxo,⁷ and Frotho, the next sovereign,⁸ fought, and with one exception obtained splendid victories in Britain, previous to the appearance of the Christian legislator. Twelve reigns afterwards, he states that Harald Hyldetand invaded England, and conquered the king of Northumbria.⁹

Some documents for his history Saxo may have derived from poems of the ancient scalds, from inscriptions on stones and rocks, from an inspection (yet how imperfect!) of the Icelandic authors, and from the narrations of his friend.¹⁰ We may even grant to him, that such men as he enumerates, such actions as he so eloquently describes, and such poems as he so diffusely translates,¹¹ once appeared; but the chronology and succession into which he arranges them are unquestionably false. The boasted fountains of the history of the ancient Scandinavians,¹² their memorial stones, and funereal runæ,¹³ the inscribed rings of their shields, the woven figures of their tapestry, their storied walls, their lettered seats and beds, their narrative wood, their recollected poetry, and their inherited traditions, may have given to history the names of many warriors, and have transmitted

dormitantem; tam miram verborum copiam, sententias crebras, et figurarum admirabilem varietatem, ut satis admirari nequeam, unde illa ætate, homini dano, tanta vis eloquendi suppetiverit. Dial. Ciceron. ap. Stephan. p. 32.

⁵ Hist. Dan. l. 2. p. 25.

⁶ Hist. Dan. l. 3. p. 56, 57. The speech of Amleth to the people, after destroying Fengo, is an exertion of eloquence very creditable to the genius of Saxo, p. 54, 55.

⁷ Hist. Dan. 67.

⁸ Hist. Dan. 95. Saxo places the birth of Christ immediately after. *Ib.*

⁹ Hist. Dan. 137.

¹⁰ Saxo mentions these authorities in his preface, p. 2. and the curious will be highly pleased with Stephanus's notes upon it.

¹¹ We have a striking proof how much

Saxo has amplified the barren songs of the scalds in his poetical and elegant dialogue between Hialto and his friend Biarco, whom he roused to the defence of his endangered king. Forgetful of the emergency, Saxo prolongs it to six folio pages. Stephanus has cited part of the concise and energetic original, p. 82. which discovers the historian's exuberance.

¹² Torfæus mentions these in the prolegomena to his History of Norway, and in his Series Regum Dan. 50—53. They are also remarked by Bartholin, l. 1. c. 9.

¹³ Wormius has given us the inscriptions found in Denmark in his Monumenta Danica, and Peringskiöld copies many out of Sweden in his Monumenta Ullerakarensia, 321—349, and in his Monumentum Svco-Goth, 177—306. See also Verelius manuductio, and others.

to posterity the fame of many battles, but no dates accompanied the memorials; even the geography of the incidents was very rarely noted. Hence, however the preserved memoranda may have been multiplied, their arrangement and appropriation were entirely left to the mercy of literary fancy or of national conceit.

Saxo has undoubtedly shaped his materials into a most confused, unwarranted, and fabulous chronology. The whole of his first eight books, all his history anteceding Ragnar Lodbrog, can as little claim the attention of the historian, as the British history of Jeffry, or the Swedish history of Johannes Magnus. It is indeed superfluous, if we recollect the Roman history, to argue against a work which pretends to give to Denmark a throned existence, a regular government, and a tissue of orderly and splendid history for twenty-four royal accessions before the birth of Christ. There is no evidence that any of his facts ought to rise higher than many centuries after our æra.

When we put down Saxo, an incredible pile of false history lies in ruins, which was founded upon him; but there is no alternative. He himself refers to the Icelandic writers,¹⁴ and their credit and Saxo's¹⁵ cannot co-exist.

The Icelandic writers, Torfæus, their best champion, divides into four kinds: the allegorical, the fabulous, the mixed, and the authentic.¹⁶

Of the authentic, the only one extant who attempts a history much earlier¹⁷ than Harald Harfragre, is Snorre, the son of

¹⁴ Though he applauds them in his preface, and even says, *quorum thesauros historicarum rerum pignoribus refertos curiosius consulens, haud parvam præsentis operis partem ex eorum relationis imitatione contexui; nec arbitros habere contempsì, quos tanta vetustatis peritia callere cognovi; notwithstanding this, it may be fairly doubted if he knew much of them.*

¹⁵ Torfæus says justly of Saxo, that he has placed some kings before Christ, who

flourished long after him; that he has made others kings of Denmark, who belonged to other regions, and has raised some to the supreme throne of Denmark, who were but tributary reguli. *Series Regum Dan.* p. 219.

¹⁶ I lament that I cannot, without being too digressive, give Torfæus's discriminated catalogue of the Icelandic writings. It is in his *Series Regum Dan.* p. 3—12.

¹⁷ There are Icelandic writers extant more ancient than Snorre, as Ara Frode, born

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Sturla, who has been truly called the pillar of Northern history.¹⁸ Beginning with Odin, Snorre first gives the history of the Ynglingi kings at Upsal, and the life of Halfdan Svarte, the father of Harald. He then continues the history of Norway to his own time.

Snorre incidentally mentions the Danish kings of Lethra,¹⁹ and he clashes irreconcilably with Saxo always in the chronology and successions, and sometimes in the incidents.²⁰ As far as the internal characters of authenticity can decide the competition between him and Saxo, he triumphs without danger. His narratives, though sprinkled with a few fables,²¹ are very short, consistent, and unadorned; they display the genuine costume of the time: the quotations from the scalds are given literally, no chronology is marked, and his arrangement does not carry up his actors to any extravagant antiquity.²²

The first king whom Snorre mentions to have had dominion in England, is Ivar Vidfadme, a king of Scania, who conquered Upsal. His words are "Ivar Vidfadme subjected to him all Sweden, all Denmark, great part of Saxony, all

1068; his contemporary, Semund, the author of the ancient Edda; Eiric, who about 1161 wrote on the sons of Harald Gillius; Charles, an abbot, in 1169, whose history of king Swerrer remains; and Oddus, author of the Saga of Olave Tryggvason; but these are on later subjects. Torfæus, *prolegomena Hist. Norv.*

¹⁸ Torfæus, *Prol. ævi patriæ que suæ decus, rei que historicæ columen.*

¹⁹ P. 24, 34, 37, 39, 41, 43, 54, 69, 70, 77.

²⁰ To give only one instance; Saxo places Helghi and his son Rolf Krake eleven reigns before Christ. Snorre says, Rolf fell in the reign of Eystein, p. 43, the third king before Ingialld, who lived in the seventh century of the Christian era.

²¹ As in p. 9. 10. 24. and 34.

²² He gives thirty-two reigns between Odin and Harald Harfragre. Almost all the kings perished violently; therefore the average of their reigns cannot exceed twenty years.

This computation would place Odin about 220 years after Christ. Nothing can show more strongly what little support the songs of the scalds can give to the remote periods of northern antiquity, than the fact that the scald Thiodolfr, on whom Snorre bases his history before Harald Harfragre, and whom he therefore quotes twenty-six times, lived in the days of Harald, or about the year 900. We find him, p. 115, singing in the last days of Harald, who died 936. Excepting Brage Gamle, who is once quoted on Odin, p. 9. and Eywindr, who lived after Thiodolfr, and who is adduced twice, p. 13. 31. no other scald is referred to. The poems of the scalds may be good authority for incidents near their own times, but can be only deemed mere popular traditions as to the earlier history of a barbarous people. Snorre's other authorities are genealogies and individual narratives. See his preface. But the Icelandic genealogies are often contradictory.

“Austurrikia, and the fifth part of England.”²³ This part of England the Hervarar Saga more explicitly marks as Northumbria.²⁴ It also adds, that all which Ivar possessed, his grandson, Haralld Hyldetand, enjoyed.²⁵ Another Saga, of the mixed kind, gives the same English territory to Sigurd Ring, the competitor of Harald, and the father of Ragner Lodbroch.²⁶

From Icelandic authorities it may be reasonably inferred, that Ivar Vidfadme lived in some part of the eighth century. The materials of our judgment are, Snorre’s account of the ancestors of Harald Harfragre, Ara Frode’s genealogy of his own family, the ancient Langfedgatal, in its ascending and descending series, the genealogy in the Flatey MSS. that in the Hervarar Saga, and the very ancient verse cited on another occasion by Torfæus.

As our most respectable chronicles expressly mark the year 787, as the date of the first appearance of the Northmen on the English coasts,²⁷ which is subsequent to the time in which the reign of Ivar can be reasonably placed; it is probable that if he conquered or plundered any where in our Island, it was on some of the Scottish coasts.

²³ Totum Svionia imperium suæ fecit ditioni Ivarus Vidfadme, toto Dania imperio, magna Saxonie parte, toto Austurrikia, et quinta Angliæ parte (præterea) potitus. Yngl. Saga, c. 45. p. 54. Saxo does not even mention Ivar.

²⁴ Quæ Northymbria vocatur, c. 19. p. 223.

²⁵ Et postea regna omnia prius memorata, quæ rex Ivar Vidfarnus possiderat, sibi subjecit, p. 223.

²⁶ Oddus’s Olaf Tryggva-Son’s Saga, cited by Torfæus, Series, p. 320. But this Saga is much intermixed with fable.

²⁷ Sax. Chron. p. 64.—That wæron tha ærestan scipu Denisera manna the angel

cynnes lond gesohton.—So Flor. Wig. Hi primi fuerunt qui de dania Angliam adierunt, p. 280. The evidence of Ethelwerd, who died 1090, is as explicit: ipsa et advectio erat prima, p. 839. The same body Malmsbury describes as having come to explore the soil and courage of the people, p. 16. Huntingdon says, hic primus fuit Anglorum cæsus a dacis, et hæ puppes primæ fuerunt, quas huc Daci adduxerunt, p. 343. Without loading the page with more verbal quotations, I will state briefly that Hoveden, 410. Matt. West. 282. the Asserii Annales, 154. Higden, 251. Wallingford, 530. and Chron. Petriburg, 9. affirm the same.

C H A P. IV.

The Expeditions of Ragnar Lodbrog, and his Death in Northumbria.

BOOK
III.
840-866.

OF the numerous vikingr and sea kings who frequented the British ocean, the man, whose death had the most disastrous influence on England, was Ragnar Lodbrog, whose reputed Quida, or death-song, has been long venerated for its antiquity, and celebrated for its genius.¹

This warrior is so near that point in Northern antiquities, where the light of history begins to mingle with the darkness of fabulous tradition, that though his existence is unquestionable,² his definite form and distinct features cannot be clearly traced.

From the phantoms of Icelandic vision,³ we will however turn aside, and simply state, that the facts concerning him, which cannot be controverted, attest, that he ruled in the Danish isles, that he passed his life in the most active piracy, that his children followed his example, that he perished in the kingdom of Northumbria, and that Ella, who reigned in this district, was the author of his destruction.

¹ The most complete edition of the Lodbrokar Quida, accessible to the English reader, is that published by the Rev. Mr. Johnstone in 1782. It is edited from various MSS. with a free English translation, the various readings, a literal Latin translation, a glossary, and notes.

² Lodbrog is mentioned by Snorre, Ara Frode, Adam of Bremen, Sveno Aggo, and Saxo; by the Ragnar Saga, the Olaf Tryggva-son's Saga, the Herraud och Bosa Saga, the Hervarar Saga, the Langfedgatal,

and many genealogies. Also by the Frankish, Norman, and English historians.

³ The defective and contradictory memoirs of Icelandic chronology, have led Torfæus, and the Danish literati of the present day who follow him, to place Ragnar's reign from 720 to 790; and, in order to suit the authorities which refer it to the next century, they suppose that there were two of the same name. The Anglo Saxon history is, however, only concerned with one Ragnar Lodbrog, who lived in the time of Egbert and Ethelwulf.

These circumstances possess undoubted authenticity. But if we desire to view them in detail, one of the best documents to which we can refer, is the *Quida* or death-song, which the learned of the North have usually quoted as his own composition,⁴ but which some traditions attribute to his wife, Aslauga.⁵ It may have been written by neither; but it is certainly very ancient, and, compared with the other histories or narrations preserved concerning him, it contains the most simple, the most probable, and the most consistent incidents.

The *Quida* celebrates the depredations of Ragnar at an English promontory, at the mouth of the Tay near Perth, in the Orkneys, in Northumbria, in the Hebrides, Ireland, and Anglesey,⁶ besides other visitations, on Norway, Frisia, and the coasts of the Baltic.⁷ Every incident is triumphantly described with the imagery of death, and the revolting circumstances attending human slaughter are recollected with exultation.

This poem presents to us one of the dreadful states of society in which our species have lived. Such were the people for whom the author composed this death-song, that, not content with equalling the pleasures of war to social festivity,⁸ he even extols it as rivalling the sweetest hour of enamoured life. "The sight was pleasing to my heart, as when my blooming bride I seated by me on the chair of state."⁹ What must

⁴ It is mentioned as his own by Wormius, by Bartholin, by Stephanus, Saxo, and others. Bartholin says, there were certainly many kings who sung their own actions. Thus Harald Hardraade composed an ode on his expedition to the Euxine, which yet exists, p. 154. There are other instances besides Lodbrog, he says, of warriors composing poetry in their last moments; he quotes their verses, 157—162.

⁵ Torfæus intimates, that it was called *Kraka-mal*, the son of *Kraka*, which was the disguised name of his wife Aslauga, and that it was probably her composition, as

she was a famous scald. Hist. Nor. i. p. 499; and Series Dan.

⁶ These are the subjects of the stanzas, from the 11th to the 21st.

⁷ The first ten stanzas relate these incidents.

⁸ "Delightful was the strife at Sky, as when the damsels bring the purple wine." St. 18. "Pleasant was the sight at Ila's Straits, as when the ministering virgin hands the wine vessels." St. 19.

⁹ Stanza 13. So "the scene was sweet, as when I welcomed the youthful widow to my throne pre-eminent." St. 14.

BOOK
III.

840-866. have been the characters, and the transactions of that nation in which the most ecstatic season of love was felt to be *but* as charming as a battle!

We may concede to the historical traditions of the North, that Ragnar Lodbrog pirated with success on various parts of Europe, on the British islands, on Sweden, Norway, and the coasts round the Baltic.¹⁰ We may admit, that he appears to have been one of those men whose lives become models to their contemporaries, and that his activity and genius were fitted to give celebrity to bloodshed, and dignity to plunder. "Full fifty times," as his Quida asserts, his lance may have announced the distant enterprise. But it would be an unjust aggrandizement of his fame, to attribute to him all the horrors which Northern piracy poured upon Europe in the first part of the ninth century. It is indeed a coincidence with his life, that till he lived, few and rare were the aggressions of the sea-king and the vikingr, beyond the northern Hellespont.¹¹ He may have given to the storm of depredation a new direction; but when he had once lifted up his spear, which his Quida truly calls, "Dire devastation's harbinger;" when he had once crossed new oceans, and thrown the beam of glory round his course, we may believe that adventurers swarmed from every coast, eager to track his way. New heroes appeared every year, and the seas were burthened with ever-succeeding fleets of such greedy and ruthless savages.

It was the lot of Ragnar to have a numerous posterity,¹² and all his passions were infused into his children. He educated

¹⁰ We may refer to Saxo, l. 9. p. 169, 177. with Stephanus's notes; to the Icelandic fragment, in 2 Langb. 270, 280; to the Ragnar Saga; and to Torfæus, in his Series Dan. and his Hist. Norveg. for the particular transactions of Ragnar. Johannes Magnus, and Loccenius, also mention his history.

¹¹ The Baltic is called by some the Hellespont. Thus Hevelius, in his observation of the eclipse of the sun taken at Dant-

zic, 1649, says, desiit itaque Hellespontum versus a puncto sc. zenith, circa 55 gradum et ab ecliptica circa 27. Dedic. to his Selenographia. The use of this word has, I think, sometimes misled Northern authors to carry some of their heroes towards the Euxine, to Homer's Hellespont.

¹² According to Saxo, he had ten sons by his three wives, p. 169. 170. 172. The Ragnar Saga, ap. Torfæus, 346, 347, gives their mothers differently from Saxo.

them to the sceptre of the ocean; and so eager and indiscriminating was their emulation of his fame, that they dared to wield it even in rebellion to his will. Sometimes the falcon and the wolf descended upon them, and their mother had the pang to mourn, which they had given to hundreds; but the Danish wife could rival the ferocity of the Spartan. Aslauga prompted them to the contest,¹³ and disdained to enshrine their memory by her sensibility. It was then as heroic and as laudable to be unnatural, as in our days it has been proclaimed to be philosophical.

Whatever depredations Ragnar committed on the Anglo-Saxons, we cannot from their annals ascertain, because, though they mention many invasions, they omit to notice the commander. But the Frankish chronicles detail two incursions into France, one by Biorn Ironside, the son of Ragnar, in 843;¹⁴ the other by Ragnar himself, in 845.¹⁵

It was an English prince who at last avenged the world on Ragnar. In opposition to Aslauga's counsel, he constructed two ships of a size which the North had never beheld before; he filled them with soldiers, and sailed along the Scottish coast to England, which he selected to be the theatre of his exertions.¹⁶

The vessels, too large for the ignorant navigation of that period, were shipwrecked on the English shore. Thrown on the coast of enemies, without means of return, Ragnar moved forward as soon as he got to the shore, to plunder and ravage, as if disdaining to recollect that his small band would soon be confronted by superior strength.

¹³ See her exhortations, 2 Langb. 275.

¹⁴ *Fragm. Hist. Brit. Armor.* ap. Bouquet, t. 7. p. 46. The chronicles which mention Biorn's expeditions are numerous. The collection of authorities in Pontoppidan's *Gesta Danorum*, may be referred to on this subject.

¹⁵ *Ragneri dux Nortmannorum venit cum classe sua et usque Parisiis accessit ac in vigilia S. Paschæ id est V. Kal. Ap. eandem urbem intravit.* Chron. Fontanel. Bouquet, 7. 41. and see the *Chronicon Vezeliacense*, ib. 271. Aimonius, ib. 350. and Petrus Olaus, 1 Langb. 109.

¹⁶ 2 Langb. 227. Torfæus, *Hist. Norv.*

Ella at that time commanded in the throne of Deira, and with the force of his kingdom marched up to the fearless vikingr; a fierce, though unequal conflict ensued. Ragnar, clothed in the garments which he had received from his beloved Aslauga at their parting, four times pierced the ranks of Ella; his friends fell one by one around him, and he at last was taken prisoner alive.

Ella obeyed the impulse of barbarian resentment, and doomed his illustrious prisoner to perish with lingering pain in a dungeon, stung by venomous snakes.¹⁷ Ragnar breathed his last energies in desires of revenge, and cheered the agonizing hour by the hopes of his superstition.¹⁸ If the Quida has preserved the true expression of his feelings, the moment of his death was signalized by a laugh of defiance.

Thus Ragnar Lodbrog perished.¹⁹ But as his life had disturbed the world, his death became prolific of calamity to England. His sons, the children of Aslauga, heard of his fate with feelings the most indignant. Their grief obeyed his command, and assumed the shape of the most desperate revenge. Retaliation, the most unbounded, was determined on; and they collected numerous hosts for that purpose.²⁰ Federated bands of warriors, inflamed with fierce and determined hatred against the king who had destroyed their favourite hero, assembled from every region. Jutes, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Frisians, and other nations, joined at length in the expedition.²¹ Eight kings and twenty jarls, the children,

¹⁷ 2 Langb. 277. Saxo has been thought to place Ella in Ireland, but whoever reads the pages, 176, 177, carefully, will see that he speaks of England. The Icelandic authors unanimously station him in Northumbria. This fact ascertains the time of Ragnar's death; for Ella usurped the Northumbrian crown in 862, and perished 867; therefore between these years Ragna must have expired.

¹⁸ See the last stanzas of the Quida.

¹⁹ The English chroniclers acknowledge that Lodbrog was killed in England; but so imperfectly was the Northumbrian history known to them, that for the true history of Ragnar's fate, they substitute two contradictory tales. See Matt. West. 314—316. and Bromton, 802.

²⁰ 2 Langb. 278. Saxo, 176. Matt. Westm. 316. Bromton, 803.

²¹ Alured. Beverl, 92. Huntingdon, 347. Simeon Dun. 13. Eth Riev. 353.

the relations, and the associates of Ragnar, were with it.²² The army of revenge appears in the Saxon chronicles as if it had quitted the Baltic in its most collected state; but it is probable that it arrived on the East Anglian coast in successive portions.

CHAP.
IV.

866.

²² Regibus 8; videlicet, Bacseg, Halfdene, Inguar, Ubba, Guthrums, Oskitel, Amund et Eowls, ac plusquam 20 comitibus et variis armorum generibus instructus. Alur.

Bev. 93. Simeon adds to his kings, Sidroc cum alio ejusdem nominis duce, Osberno quoque et Frena, necnon Haraldo adducti, p. 14.

CHAP. V.

*The Reign of Ethelred, and the Actions of the Sons of
Ragnar Lodbrog, in England.*

BOOK
III.

866.

ETHELRED was scarcely seated on his brother's throne, before the Danish confederacy began to arrive. It found the country in a state auspicious to an invasion. Four distinct governments divided its natural force, whose narrow policy saw nothing but triumph and safety in the destruction of each other. One of these, the peculiar object of the hostility of the North, was plunged in a civil warfare.

Of the Anglo-Saxon governments, the kingdom of Northumbria had been always the most perturbed. Usurper murdering usurper, is the pervading incident. A crowd of ghastly monarchs pass swiftly along the page of history as we gaze; and scarcely was the sword of the assassin sheathed before it was drawn against its master, and he was carried to the sepulchre which he had just closed upon another. In this manner, during the last century and a half, no fewer than seventeen sceptred chiefs hurled each other from their joyless throne,¹ and the deaths of the greatest number were accompanied by hecatombs of their friends.

When the Northern fleet suddenly appeared off East Anglia, the sanguinary drama was reacting in Northumbria. Osbert had been four years expelled by Ella from the throne which he had usurped from another, and at this juncture was formidable enough to dare his rival again to the ambitious field.

¹ Ella is called by Huntingdon degenerem, progenitum super regni apicem constituerant, 349. Asser describes him as tyrannum p. 18. quendam Ella nomine non de regali prosapia

The Danish chieftains who first landed, did not at once rush to their destined prey. Whether accident or policy had occasioned them to disembark in East Anglia, they made it a beneficial event. Awing the country by a force which the winds had never wafted from Denmark before,² they quietly passed the winter in their camp, collecting provisions and uniting their friends. They demanded a supply of horses from the king, who complied with their request, and mounted the greatest part of their army.³ He attempted no enmity; he suffered them to enjoy their wintry feasts unmolested; no alliance with the other Saxon kingdoms was made during the interval; each state looked on with hope, that the collected tempest was to burst upon another; and as the menaced government was a rival, nothing but advantage was foreseen from its destruction.

The Northern kings must have contemplated this behaviour with all the satisfaction and contempt of meditative mischief and conscious superiority. The Northumbrian usurpers at last sheathed, though tardily, the swords of contending ambition; and, on the advice of their nobles, united for their mutual defence and the general safety.⁴

The invaders, though in many bands, like the Grecian host before Troy, yet submitted to the predominance of Ingwar and Ubbo, two of the sons of Ragnar. Of these two, Ingwar was distinguished for a commanding genius, and Ubbo for his fortitude; both were highly courageous, and inordinately cruel.⁵

² Tam validus enim et tam numerosus ec antea nec post Angliam adiit exercitus. Al. Bev. 93.

³ Asser, 15. The Icelanders intimate that the Northmen on their first arrival found Ella too powerful; and that Ivar negotiated with him, and cultivated treasonable intercourse with his subjects, till the complete arrival of the invaders enabled him to prosecute his revenge. 2 Langb. 278.

⁴ Ideoque tarde concordati. Hunt. 349. Advenientibus paganis consilio divino et op-

timatum adminiculo pro communi utilitate discordia illa aliquantulum sedata. Asser, 18. —So Sim. Dun. 14.

⁵ Quorum duces fuerunt Hinguar et Ubba viri strenuissimi sed crudelissimi; Hinguar erat ingentis ingenii, Ubba vero fortitudinis admirandæ, Hunt. 348. Ubbo is called chief of the Frisians by Sim. Dun. 70. Adam of Bremen describes Ingwar as the most cruel of all, and as destroying Christians every where in torments, p. 14.

In the next spring, the invaders roused from their useful repose, and marched into Yorkshire. The metropolis of the county was their first object; and, on the first of March, it yielded to their attack. Devastation followed their footsteps; they extended their divisions to the Tyne, but, without passing it, returned to York.⁶

Osbert and Ella, having completed their pacification, moved forwards, accompanied with eight of their earls, and, on the 12th of April, assaulted the Northmen near York. The Danes, surprized by the attack, fled into the city. The English pursued with the eagerness of anticipated victory, broke down the slight walls,⁷ and entered, conflicting promiscuously with their enemies; but, having abandoned the great advantage of their superior discipline, the English rushed only to destruction. No nation could hope to excel the Northmen in personal intrepidity or manual dexterity; from their childhood they were exercised in single combat and disorderly warfare; the disunited Northumbrians were therefore cut down with irremediable slaughter. Osbert and Ella, their chiefs, and most of their army, perished.⁸ The sons of Ragnar inflicted a cruel and inhuman retaliation on Ella, for their father's sufferings. They divided his back, spread his ribs into the figure of an eagle, and agonized his lacerated flesh by the addition of the saline stimulant.⁹

After this battle, decisive of the fate of Northumbria, it appeared no more as an Anglo-Saxon kingdom. The people beyond the Tyne appointed Egbert as their sovereign, but in a few years he was expelled, and one Ricseg took the shadowy diadem. In 876 he died with grief at the distresses of his country, and another Egbert obtained the nominal ho-

⁶ Sim. Dun. 14. In this year Ealstan died, the celebrated bishop and statesman. Asser, 18.

⁷ Asser remarks, that York had not at this period walls so firm and stable as in the latter part of Alfred's reign, 18.

⁸ Asser, 18. Sim. Dun. 14. The place

where they fell was in Bromton's time called Ellescroft. Bromt. 803.

⁹ Frag. Isl. 2 Lang. 279. Ragnar Saga, ib. The Scalld Sigvatr. ib. Saxo Gram. 177. This punishment was often inflicted by these savage conquerors on their enemies. See some instances in Stephanus, 193.

nours.¹⁰ But Ivar was the Danish chief, who, with the arm of victory, usurped the sceptre of Northumbria from the Humber to the Tyne.¹¹

A dismal sacrifice had been offered up to the manes of Ragnar, yet the invaders did not depart. It was soon evident that their object was to conquer, in order to occupy; desolation followed their victories, because Northmen could not move to battle without it; but while plunder was the concomitant of their march, dominion became the passion of their chiefs.

The country was affected by a great dearth this year, which the presence of such enemies must have enhanced. Alfred had now reached his nineteenth year; he was raised by his brother to an inferior participation of the regal dignity, and he married Ealswitha, the daughter of a Mercian nobleman.¹²

Alfred's marriage.

The Northmen having resolved on their plans of occupation and conquest, began to separate into divisions. One body rebuilt York, cultivated the country round it, and continued to colonize it.¹³ It may be presumed that Ivar headed these. Other bands devoted themselves to promote the ambition of those chieftains who also aspired to royal settlements.

This army passed the Humber into Mercia, and established themselves at Nottingham,¹⁴ where they wintered. Alarmed by their approach, Burrhed, the king, and his nobles, sent an urgent embassy to West Saxony for assistance. Ethelred, with judicious policy, hastened to his wishes. He joined the

868.

¹⁰ Sim. Dun. 14. Matt. Westm. 326, 327, 328. Leland's Collect. 2. p. 373.

¹¹ The language of the Northern writers is, that Ivar obtained that part of England which his ancestors had possessed. Ragnar Saga, in Torfæus Series Dan. Olaf Tryggv. Saga. ib. 375. This adds that he reigned a long while, and died without issue, 376. So Frag. Isl. 2 Langb. 279.

¹² Ethelred, surnamed the Large. The

mother of Alfred's queen was Eadburh, of the family of the Mercian kings. Asser frequently saw her before her death, and calls her a venerable woman, 19.

¹³ Sim. Dun. Vita St. Cuthberti, 71.

¹⁴ Its British name was Tiguo Cobauc, the house of caves. Asser, 19. In the charter of 868, it is called Snotheryngam, which in the days of Ingulf had become changed to Nottingham, p. 18, 19.

Mercian with Alfred and the whole force of his dominions; and their united armies marched towards the frontier through which the invaders had penetrated.

They found the Northmen in possession of Nottingham; the Danes discerned the great superiority of the allied armies, and remained within the strong walls and castle of the town.¹⁵ The Anglo-Saxons were incapable of breaking through these fortifications, and their mutual respect, after an ineffectual struggle, occasioned a pacification, advantageous only to the Danes. The invaders were to retreat to York, and the kings of Wessex returned home.¹⁶

869. The Northmen returned to York with great booty.¹⁷ In this year two of the most terrible calamities to mankind occurred, a great famine, and its inevitable attendant, a mortality of cattle, and of the human race.¹⁸ The general misery presented no temptations to the rapacity of the Northmen, and they remained a year in their Yorkshire stations.¹⁹

870. When spring arrived, they threw off all disguise, and signalized this fourth year of their residence in England by a series of hostilities the most fatal, and of ravages the most cruel. They embarked on the Humber, and, sailing to Lincolnshire, landed at Humberstan in Lindesey.²⁰ From this period, language cannot describe their devastations. It can only repeat the words plunder, murder, rape, famine and distress. It can only enumerate towns, villages, churches and monasteries, harvests, and libraries, ransacked and burnt. But by the incessant repetition, the horrors are diminished; and we

¹⁵ Pagani munitione fortissimorum murorum et areis validissimæ confidentes. Ingulf, 20. Burghed in a charter to Croyland, dated 1 Aug. 868, states himself to have made it at Snotryngham before his brother's friends, and all his people assembled to besiege the pagans.

¹⁶ Asser, 20, mentions no conflict; the Saxon Chronicle asserts, that an attack was made on the entrenchments, but disgraces

the Anglo-Saxons, by adding, that it was not severe, p. 79. The monk of Croyland praises the young earl Algar, for his prowess in the affair, p. 18.

¹⁷ Ingulf, 18—20.

¹⁸ Asser, 20.

¹⁹ Sax. Chron. 80. Asser, 20.

²⁰ Lindesey was the largest of the three parts into which the county of Lincoln was anciently divided.

read, without emotion, the narration of deeds which rent the hearts of thousands with anguish, and inflicted wounds on human happiness and human improvement, which ages with difficulty healed. Instead, therefore, of general statements, which glide as unimpressively over the mind as the arrow upon ice, it may be preferable to select a few incidents, to imply those scenes of desolation, which, if narrated in the aggregate, would confuse and overwhelm the sensibility of our perception.

After destroying the monastery, and slaying all the monks of Bardeney, they employed the summer in desolating the country around with sword and fire.²¹ About Michaelmas they passed the Witham, and entered the district of Kesteven,²² with the same dismal ministers of fate. The sovereign of the country made no effort of defence; but a patriotic few attempted to procure for themselves and the rest, that protection which their government did not impart.

The brave earl Algar, in September, drew out the youth of Hoiland;²³ his two seneschals, Wibert and Leofric, assembled from Deeping, Langtoft, and Boston, 300 valiant and well appointed men; 200 more joined him from the Croyland monastery. They were composed of fugitives, and were led by Toliis, who had assumed the cowl; but who, previous to his entering the sacred profession, had been celebrated for his military character. Morcard, lord of Brunne, added his family, who were undaunted and numerous. Osgot, the sheriff of Lincoln, a courageous and formidable veteran, collected 500 more from the inhabitants of the county. These patriots, not 3,000 in number, united in Kesteven, with

²¹ Ingulf, 20.

²² Kesteven was another of the three districts into which Lincolnshire was anciently divided.

²³ Hoiland, or Holland; the southern division of Lincolnshire, which extended from the Witham to the Nine. Like the Batavian

Holland, it was so moist, that the surface shook if stamped upon, and the print of the feet remained on it. It was composed of two parts, the Lower and the Upper. The lower was full of impassable marshes; huge banks preserved it from the ocean. Camd. 459.

the daring hope of checking, by their valour, the progress of the ferocious invaders.

On the feast of St. Maurice, they attacked the advanced bands of the Northmen with such auspicious bravery, that they slew three of their kings, and many of the soldiers. They chased the rest to the gates of their entrenchments, and, notwithstanding a fierce resistance, they assailed these, till the advance of night compelled the valiant earl to call off his noble army.²⁴

With an unpropitious celerity, the other kings of the Northmen, who had spread themselves over the country to plunder it, Godrun, Bacseg, Oskitul, Halfden, and Amond, together with Frena, Ingwar, Ubbo, and the two Sidrocs, hastened, during the night, to reunite their bands in the camp. An immense booty, and a numerous multitude of women and children, their spoil, accompanied them.

The news of their unfortunate arrival reached the English stations, and produced a lamentable effect; for a part of the small army, affrighted by the vast disproportion of numbers which in the ensuing morn they must encounter, fled during the darkness of the night. This desertion might have inspired and justified a general flight; but the rest, as though they had felt that their post was the Thermopylæ of England, with generous magnanimity and religious solemnity, prepared themselves to perish for their country and their faith.

The brave Algar managed his diminished force with the wisest œconomy, and with soldierly judgment. He selected the valiant Toliis, and 500 intrepid followers, for the post of the greatest danger, and therefore placed them on his right. Morcard, the lord of Brunne, and his companions in arms, he stationed with them. On the left of his array, Osgot, the illustrious sheriff, with his 500 soldiers, took his allotted post with Harding of Rehale, and the young and impetuous citi-

²⁴ Ingulf, 20. Chron. St. Petri de Burgo, obtained the name of Trekyngham. It was
16. The place where these three kings fell, before named Lacundon. Ing. 21.

zens of Stamford. Algar himself, with his seneschals, chose the centre, that they might be ready to aid either division as exigency required.

The Northmen, in the first dawn of light, buried their three kings, and leaving two other of their royal leaders, with four earls, to guard their camp and captives, they moved forwards with four kings and eight earls, burning with fury for the disgrace of their friends on the preceding day.

The English, from their small number, contracted themselves into a wedge; against the impetus of the Northern darts, they presented an impenetrable arch of shields, and they repelled the violence of the horse by a dense arrangement of their spears. Lessoned by their intelligent commanders, they maintained their station immoveable the whole day.

Evening advanced, and their unconquered valour had kept off enemies, whose numbers had menaced them with inevitable ruin. The Northmen had spent their darts in vain. Their horsemen were wearied with the ineffectual toil of the day; and their whole army, despairing of success, in feigned confusion withdrew. Elated at the sight of the retreating foe, the English, quitting their array, sprang forwards to complete their conquest. In vain their hoary leaders expostulated, in vain proclaimed ruin if they separated. Intoxicated with the prospect of un hoped success, they forgot that it was the skill of their commanders, which, more than their own bravery, had protected them. They forgot the fewness of their numbers, and the yet immense superiority of their foes. They saw flight, and they thought only of victory. Dispersed in their eager pursuit, they displayed to the Northern chiefs a certain means of conquest. Suddenly the Pagans rallied in every part, and rushing upon the scattered English, surrounded them on every side. It was then they saw what fatal rashness had involved in equal ruin their country and themselves. They had almost rescued England from destruction by their

valour and conduct; and now, by a moment's folly, all their advantages were lost. For a while, Algar, the undaunted earl, and the self-devoting Tolius, with the other chiefs, discreet even in the midst of approaching ruin, by gaining a little eminence, protracted their fate. But as the dispersed English could not be reunited, as the dissolved arrangement could not be recomposed, the valour and skill of the magnanimous leaders, however exalted and unexcelled, could only serve to multiply the victims of the day. The possibility of victory was vanished. The six chiefs beheld their followers falling fast around; death approached themselves. Raised upon the bodies of their friends, they returned wound for wound, till, fainting under innumerable wounds, they expired upon the corse of their too impetuous companions.²⁵

A few youths of Sutton and Gedeney threw their arms into the neighbouring wood, and escaping with difficulty in the following night, they communicated the fatal catastrophe to the monastery of Croyland,²⁶ while its abbot and the society were performing matins. The dismal tidings struck terror into every breast; all foreboded that the next blow of calamity would fall on them. The abbot, retaining with him the aged monks and a few infants, sent away the youthful and the strong, with their relics, jewels, and charters, to hide themselves in the nearest marshes, till the demons of slaughter had passed by. With anxious haste they loaded a boat with their treasures. They threw their domestic property into the waters, but as part of the table of the great altar, plated with gold, rose above the waves, they drew it out, and replaced it in the abbey.

The flames of the villages in Kesteven now gradually spread towards them, and the clamours of the fierce pagans drew nearer. Alarmed, they resumed their boat, and reached the

²⁵ This interesting narrative is in Ingulf, 20—21.

²⁶ Croyland was one of the islands lying in that tract of the Eastern waters, which,

rising from the middle of the country, and spreading above 100 miles, precipitated themselves into the sea with many great rivers. Malm. Gest. Pont. 292.

wood of Ancarig, near the south of the island.²⁷ Here, with Toretus, the anchorite, and his fraternity, they remained four days.

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The abbot, and they who were too young or too old to fly, put on their sacred vestments, and assembled in the choir, with the faint hope, that unresisting age and harmless childhood would disarm ferocity of its cruelty. Soon a furious torrent of howling barbarians poured in, exulting to find Christian priests to massacre. The venerable abbot was hewed down at the altar by the cruel Oskitul, and the attendant ministers were beheaded after him. The old men and children, who ran affrighted from the choir, were seized and tortured, to discover the treasure of the place. The prior suffered in the vestry, the subprior in the refectory; every part of the sacred edifice was stained with blood. One child only, of ten years of age, whose beautiful countenance happened to interest the younger Sidroc,²⁸ was permitted to survive. The spoilers broke down all the tombs and monuments, with the avaricious hope of discovering treasures; and, on the third day, they committed the superb edifice to the flames.

With immense plunder of cattle, the insatiate barbarians marched the next day to Peterborough.²⁹ There stood a

²⁷ Or Thorn-ey, the island of Thorns. There was a monastery here. Malmsbury exhibits it as the picture of a paradise; amidst the marshes abounding in trees, was a fine green plain, as smooth and level as a stream; every part was cultivated; here apple-trees arose, there vines crept along the fields, or twined round poles. Yet he adds one trait so expressive of lonesomeness, as to throw a gloom over the charms of nature: "When a man comes he is applauded like an angel." De Gest. Pont. 294.

²⁸ One of the Sidrocs had already distinguished himself for his aggressions on France. In 852, and 855, he entered the Seine with much successful depredation. Chron. Fontanel. Bouquet 7. p. 40—43.

²⁹ The original name was Medeshamstede.

This also stands in the land of the Girvii or Fenmen, who occupied those immense marshes, containing millions of acres, where the counties of Lincoln, Cambridge, Huntingdon, and Northampton meet. Camd. 408. The marshes are described by Hugo Candidus as furnishing wood and turf for fire, hay for cattle, reeds for thatching, and fish and water-fowl for subsistence. Peterborough monastery was in the best portion. On one side was a range of water, on the other woods and a cultivated country. It was accessible on all sides but the East, where a boat was requisite. The Saxons laid the foundations of the monastery in 655, by plunging into the marshes stones so immense, that eight yoke of oxen could scarcely draw one. Hugo. Cand. p. 2. 4. ed. Lond. 1723.

monastery, the glory of the architecture of the age, and whose library was an immense repository of books, which the anxious labours of two centuries had collected. But arts and science were toys not worthy even to amuse their women, in the estimation of these invaders. They assailed the gates and fastenings, and with their archers and machines attacked the walls. A brother of Ubbo was carried off to his tent, wounded by the blow of a stone. This incident added a new incentive to the cruel fury of the Northmen. They burst in at the second assault under Ubbo. He slew the hoary abbot, and all the monks, with his own weapon. Every other inhabitant was slaughtered without mercy by his followers. One man only had a gleam of humanity. Sidroc cautioned the little boy, whom he had saved from Croyland, to keep out of the way of Ubbo. The immense booty which they were gorged with did not mitigate their love of ruin. The much admired monastery, and its valuable and irreparable treasures, were soon wrapt in fire. For fifteen days the conflagration continued.

The Northmen, turning to the south, advanced to Huntingdon. The two earls Sidroc were appointed to guard the rear and the baggage over the rivers. As they were passing the Nen,³⁰ after the rest of the army, two cars, laden with vast wealth and property, with all the cattle drawing them, were overturned, at the left of the stone bridge, into a depthless whirlpool. While all the attendants of the younger Sidroc were employed in recovering what was possible of the loss, the child of Croyland ran into the nearest wood, and, walking all night, he beheld the smoking ruins of his monastery at the dawn.

He found that the monks had returned from Incarig the day before, and were laboriously toiling to extinguish the flames, which yet raged in various divisions of the monastery. When

³⁰ This river runs through Northampton, banks. Camden calls it a very noble river, making many reaches by the winding of its p. 430.

they heard from the infant the fate of their superior and elder brethren, unconquerable sorrow suspended their exertions, till wearied nature compelled a remission of their grief. They collected such as they could find of the mutilated and half-consumed bodies, and buried them with sympathetic reverence. Having repaired part of the ruins, they chose another abbot; when the hermits of Incarig came to implore their charitable care for the bodies at Peterborough, which the animals of prey were violating. A deputation of monks was sent, who found the corpses, and interred them in one large grave, with the abbot at the summit. A stony pyramid covered his remains, round which were afterwards engraven their images, in memorial of the catastrophe.³¹

With devastation and murder still shrieking around them as they marched, the Northmen proceeded into Cambridgeshire. Ely and its female devotees fell victims to their rage, and many other places were desolated.

The sanguinary torrent rolled afterwards into East Anglia.³² The throne of this kingdom was occupied by Edmund, a man praised for his affability, his gentleness, and humility. He may have merited all the lavish encomiums which he has received for the milder virtues; but he was deficient in those manly energies whose vigorous activity would have met the storm in its fury, and might have disarmed it of its terrors.³³

Invasion of
East Anglia.

Ingwar, separating from Ubbo, proceeded to the place where Edmund resided. The picture annexed to his route

³¹ Ingulf, 22—24. Chron. Petrib. 18—20.

³² Abbo Floriacensis, who wrote in the tenth century, describes East Anglia as nearly environed with waters; immense marshes, an hundred miles in extent, were on the north; the ocean on the east and south. On the west it was protected from the irruptions of the other members of the octarchy, by a mound of earth like a lofty wall. Its soil was fertile and pleasant; it was full of lakes two or three miles in space; its marshes were peopled with monks. MSS. Cott. Library. Tib. B. 2. p. 3.

³³ One of the fullest accounts of the fate of Edmund, is in the little book of Abbo. He addresses it to the famous Dunstan, from whom he had the particulars he narrates. He intimates that Dunstan used to repeat them with eyes moist with tears, and had learnt them from an old soldier of Edmund's, who simply and faithfully recounted them upon his oath to the illustrious Ethelstan. Abbo's treatise has been printed abroad in Acta Sanctorum. Cologne, v. 6. p. 465—472. ed. 1575.

represents a burning country, the highways strewed with the victims of massacre, violated women, the husband expiring on his own threshold in the arms of his wife, and the infant torn from its mother's bosom, and bleeding before her eyes. The object of Ingwar was to surprize the king, before he could present an armed country to repel him. Edmund, though horrors had for some time been raging round his frontiers, was roused to no preparations; had meditated no warfare. He was dwelling quietly in a village near Hagilsdun,³⁴ when the active Dane appeared near him, and was taken completely unawares.

His earl, Ulfketul, had made one effort to save East Anglia, but it failed. His army was decisively beaten at Thetford with profuse slaughter; and this calamity deeply wounded the mind of Edmund, who did not reflect, that to resist the Danes with energy, was not merely to uphold his own domination, but to protect his people from the most fatal ruin.³⁵

As Ingwar drew nigh to the royal residence, he sent one of his countrymen to the king, with a haughty command, to divide his treasures, submit to his religion, and reign in subjection to his will. "And who are you that should dare to withstand our power! The storm of the ocean deters not our proposed enterprise, but accelerates our course. We endure uninjured both the thunder and the lightnings of the sky. Submit, then, with your subjects to a master to whom even the elements are subservient."³⁶

On receiving this imperious message, Edmund held counsel with one of his bishops who enjoyed his confidence. The ecclesiastic, apprehensive of the king's safety, exhorted his

³⁴ The Hill of Eagles. It is now, says Bromton, 805, called Hoxne. It is upon the Waveney, a little river dividing part of Norfolk from Suffolk. It is not far from Diss in Suffolk. Camden names it Hoxon, p. 375.

³⁵ Ingulf, 24. Asser, 20. Matt. West. 318.

³⁶ Abbo Flor. p. 7. In this author's little composition, he has inserted phrases from Virgil and Horace.

compliance. A dialogue ensued, in which Edmund displayed the sensibility of an amiable mind, but not those active talents which would have given safety to his people. He pitied his unhappy subjects, groaning under every evil which a barbarous enemy could inflict, and wished his death could restore them. When the bishop represented to him the ravages which the Northmen had perpetrated, and the danger which impended on himself, and advised his flight, the mild-hearted king exclaimed, "I desire not to survive my dear subjects; I have never borne the shame of abandoning my fellow soldiers, because I feel it noble rather to die for my country; and shall I now be a voluntary recreant, when the loss of those I loved makes even the light of heaven tedious to me?" The Danish envoy was then called in, and Edmund addressed him with an energy that ought to have anticipated such a crisis, and to have influenced his actions. "Stained as you are with the blood of my people, you deserve death; but I will imitate the example of him I venerate, and not pollute myself with your blood. Tell your commander, I am neither terrified by his threats, nor deluded by his promises. Let his boundless cupidity, which no plunder can satiate, take and consume my treasures. Let him destroy this frail and falling body, like a despised vessel; but know, that my unconquered mind will not, for an instant, bow before him. Hence! my spirit shall leave its prison, contaminated by no subordination to your ferocity, or your idolatry. How can you allure me by the hope of retained power, as if I were so desperately ambitious as to covet a kingdom, mutilated in its population, or a few subjects robbed of every thing that makes life valuable!"³⁷

This display of passive fortitude only roused the resentment of the Dane, whose rapid hostilities had now made active warfare useless. The king was taken without farther contest.

³⁷ Abbo Flor. p. 7, 8, 9. Cott. MSS.

He was bound with close fetters, and severely beaten. He was then dragged to a tree, tied to its trunk, and lacerated with whips. Even these sufferings could not appease the tigers of the Baltic. They aimed their arrows at his body with contending dexterity. At length Ingwar, enraged at his firmness and piety, closed the cruel scene by the amputation of his head.³⁸

Thus terminated another kingdom of the Anglo-Saxon octarchy, which, as it had been baneful to the happiness of the island by occasioning incessant warfare, was now become wholly incompatible with the security of every individual, while the states of the continent were enlarging, and the North was pouring its throngs around. By annihilating with such total extirpation all the rival dynasties, and the prejudices which supported them, the Danes unconsciously made some atonement for the calamities they diffused. They harrassed the Anglo-Saxons into national fraternity, and combined contending sceptres into one well-regulated monarchy.

The Northmen placed Godrun, one of their kings, over East Anglia; while the brother of Edmund, terrified at the miseries of the day, fled into Dorset, and there lived an hermetical life on bread and water.³⁹

Having resolved to attempt the subjugation of the island, the Northmen governed their career with policy, as distinguished as their cruelty. They had attacked Mercia, and they beheld the banners of West Saxony waving on its frontiers. If they assaulted Wessex, would the Mercian sword be there? Their experience proved that they calculated well on the petty policy of that degraded kingdom. Although the crown of Mercia trembled in every battle in Wessex; though it was impossible for Alfred to be conquered, and for Burrhed

³⁸ The 20th of November was the day of his catastrophe, which was so interesting, that the Islander, Ara Frode, makes it one of the steps of his chronology, p. 7. He was canonized. His memory was much venerated, and his name still exists in our calendars.

³⁹ Malmsb. 250. Bromton, 807.

to be secure, yet the protecting succour which Mercia had received from the kings of Wessex, was never returned, though common danger claimed it.

Ingwar having completed the conquest of East Anglia, and permitted his associate, Godrun, to assume its sceptre, returned to his brother Ubbo, in Northumbria.⁴⁰ The rest of the invaders, under the command of Halfden and Bacseg, two of their kings, or sea-kings, hastened from East Anglia into Wessex.

From Norfolk they penetrated unchecked into Berkshire; they possessed themselves of Reading as soon as they reached it, and continued there many days unmolested.

Wessex
attacked.

On the third day after their arrival, their leaders, with a powerful body of cavalry, spread themselves successfully to pillage; the rest dug a trench between the Thames and the Kennet, to the right of the city, to defend their encampments. Ethelwulf, the earl of the county, who had won laurels from the invaders before, collected the men of the vicinity, and exhorted them to disregard the superiority of the foe. His argument was a popular one: "What though their army is larger than ours, Christ, our general, is stronger than them." His countrymen were convinced by his logic; and, after a long combat, the invaders were defeated at Inglefield,⁴¹ with the loss of Sidroc the elder, the chief who had so much afflicted France.

Four days after this conflict, the kings of Wessex, Ethelred and Alfred, put themselves into motion, and, joining the earl Ethelwulf, attacked the Northmen at Reading. They prostrated all the enemies who were out of the citadel; but those

⁴⁰ Bromt. 807. Ethelwerd says, Ivar Britain died," p. 65. His children, sea-kings, died this year, p. 843. The Annals of Ulster state, that he went in this year from Scotland to Dublin with 200 ships, with great booty, and a multitude of English, Welsh, and Pictish prisoners. These annals place his death, in 872, thus: "872, Ivar, king of all the Northerns in Ireland and like himself, are often mentioned in these Irish annals.

⁴¹ Sax. Chron. 80. Sim. Dun. 125. Asser, 21. Inglefield is a little village in the neighbourhood of Reading. Camden, 142, who, in a small mistake, calls Ethelwulf a king, instead of an earl.

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III.
870.

within rushing from all its gates, a fiercer battle followed, which ended in the death of Ethelwulf, and the retreat of the West Saxons.⁴²

Taken unawares by the invasion, the West Saxons had rushed to the conflict with a hasty and inadequate force. Four days afterwards, they collected in a more complete and formidable array, and combated the enemy at Æscesdun, or the Ash-tree Hill.⁴³ The Danes had accumulated all their strength, and, with an attempt at tactical arrangement, they divided themselves into two bodies; one, the chief, their two kings conducted; the other moved under the earls. The English imitated their array. Ethelred resolved himself to encounter the Northern kings, and appointed Alfred to shock with their earls. Both armies raised their shields into a tortoise-arch, and demanded the battle.

The Northmen were first in the field; for Ethelred, impressed with that dispiriting belief, which men on the eve of great conflicts sometimes experience, that he should not survive it, waited to say his orisons in his tent. Alfred, more eager for the fray, and provoked by the defying presence of the enemy, was impatient at the delay; his indignant courage forgot the inferiority of the division which he commanded; he led up his troops in condensed order, and disdained to remark that the crafty Danes were waiting on an eminence for an advantageous conflict.⁴⁴ A solitary tree marked the place of combat, and round this the nations shocked with frightful clamour and equal bravery. The exertions of Alfred were unavailing; he had been too precipitate. The English ranks gave way, when the presence of Ethelred, with his battle, destroyed the inequality of the combatants, and reanimated the fainting spirits of his countrymen. The long and dreadful struggle at last ended in the death of the king Bacseg, of the younger Sidroc,⁴⁴ many other earls, and some thousands of the

⁴² Sim. Dun. 125. Asser, 21.

⁴³ Asser, 21.

⁴⁴ The printed copy of the Saxon Chronicle places the deaths of both the Sidrocs in

Danes, who fled in general rout. The English chased them all night and the next day over the fields of Ashdown, till they reached their fortress at Reading.⁴⁵ The slaughter of the day gave it a dismal claim to memory.⁴⁶

Fourteen days after this, the Danes had collected strength sufficient to defeat the kings of Wessex at Basing.⁴⁷ An important accession of allies, newly arrived from the North,⁴⁸ increased the terrors of this defeat, and augured new miseries to the Anglo-Saxons.

The last invaders joined harmoniously with the preceding, because their object was the same. Within two months afterwards, the princes of Wessex supported another battle with the recruited confederates at Merton;⁴⁹ but the conflict, after many changes of victory, was again unfortunate to the English. Ethelred received a wound in it, of which he died soon after Easter, and was interred at Wimburn.⁵⁰ Ethelred dies.

this battle, although it had recorded the fall of one in the preceding battle. The fine MS. of the Saxon Chronicle in the Cotton Library, Tib. B. 4. p. 30. having mentioned the death of one Sidroc at Inglefield, more correctly refers the death of the younger Sidroc only to this battle: "and ther Sidrac se geonga, and Osbeorn eorl, and Fræna eorl, and Harald eorl." This MS. though in some respects less complete than those which Dr. Gibson edited, is yet more accurate in others. It is remarkably well written, and seems very ancient.

⁴⁵ Asser, 23, 24. Flor. Wig. 307. Sax. Chr. 81.

⁴⁶ The place of this great battle has been controverted. Aston, near Wallingford, in Berks, has good claims, because the Saxon Chronicle (as its editor observed) mentions *Æscesdun*, on another occasion, as close by Wallingford, p. 135. Dr. Wise, in his letter to Dr. Mead, concerning some antiquities in Berkshire, printed 1738, contends, that the famous white horse on the hill was made to commemorate this victory. He says, "I take *Æscesdune* to mean that ridge of hills from Letcombe and thereabouts, going on to Wiltshire, and overlooking the vale with

the towns in it. The town formerly called Ayshesdown, is now called Ashbury; the old name is still preserved hereabouts, the Downs being called by the shepherds, Ashdown; and about a mile southward from Ashbury, is Ashdown Park, p. 20.

⁴⁷ Asser, 24.

⁴⁸ Quo prælio peracto, de ultramarinis partibus alius paganorum exercitus societati se adjunxit. Asser, 24.

⁴⁹ Sax. Chron. 81. This position of Merton is doubtful. Merton in Surrey, Merden in Wilts, and Merton in Oxfordshire, have been suggested. I am induced to venture a new opinion, that it was Morton in Berks, because the Chronicle of Mailros, 144, places the battle at Reading, and, according to the map, Morton hundred joins Reading, and contains both North Merton and South Merton.

⁵⁰ Bromton, 809. The bishop of Sherborne fell in this battle. Mat. West. 323. The Saxon Chronicle says, that he and many godra menna fell in it, 81. whom Huntingdon calls multi proceres Angliæ, p. 349. Ethelwerd, the chronicler, in mentioning Ethelred's death, styles the king his atavus, p. 843.

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870

Danes, who fled in great haste. The English chased them all night and the next day over the hills of Ashdown till they reached their towers at Reading. The slaughter of the day gave it a distant claim to notoriety.

Forty-two days after the battle the Danes had collected strength sufficient to defeat the king of Wessex at Reading. An important accession of allies, newly arrived from the North, increased the forces of the Danish and augmented the numbers to the Anglo-Saxons.

The last invaders joined harmoniously with the preceding, because their object was the same. Within two months afterwards, the prince of Wessex supported another battle with the renewed contingents at Merton. But the result, after many changes of victory, was again unfortunate to the English. Ethelred received a wound in the head which he died soon after. Eadgar, and was interred at Winchester.

The battle of Merton, which took place on the 10th of April, 870, was the last of the kind in the history of the Anglo-Saxons. The Danes, who had been driven back by the English at the battle of Ashdown, had now collected a large force, and had been joined by a number of allies from the North. The English, on the other hand, were divided into two parties, the one supporting the king, Eadgar, and the other supporting the prince of Wessex, Eadmund. The battle was fought on a plain near Merton, and the result was a decisive victory for the Danes. Eadgar was killed, and Eadmund fled to the North. The Danes then entered the city of London, and remained there for several months. The English, who had been driven back to the city, were now in a state of great distress, and the Danes were in a position to demand a large sum of money for their departure. The English, however, refused to pay, and the Danes, in consequence, remained in the city for a long time. The result of the battle was a great loss to the English, and a great gain to the Danes. The English, who had been driven back to the city, were now in a state of great distress, and the Danes were in a position to demand a large sum of money for their departure. The English, however, refused to pay, and the Danes, in consequence, remained in the city for a long time. The result of the battle was a great loss to the English, and a great gain to the Danes.

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK IV.

CHAP. I.

The Reign of Alfred, from his Accession to his Retirement.

THE death of Ethelred raised Alfred to the throne of Wessex. Some children of his elder brother were alive,¹ but the crisis was too awful for the nation to have suffered the sceptre to be feebly wielded by a juvenile hand. The dangers which environed the country, excited the earls and nobles, with the unanimous approbation of the country, to chuse Alfred for the successor, that they might have a prince who could give them the protection of his abilities.*

It is intimated that he hesitated;³ and indeed, every evil which can corrode human happiness, seemed about to surround the diadem offered to Alfred. It was a crown taken up from

¹ Alfred in his will gave eight manors to Æthelm, his brother's son, and three manors to Athelwold, his brother's son. He also gave some manors to his cousin Osferth. The end of Athelwold will be seen in Edward's reign.

² Mox Elfredus a ducibus et a præsulibus totius gentis eligitur et non solum ab ipsis verum etiam ab omni populo adoratur ut eis

præset ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus, increpationes in populis. Sim. Dun. 126, 127.—Cum summa omnium illius regni accolarum voluntate. Asser, 24.

³ Asser's expression is, that he began to reign quasi invitus, as if unwillingly, because he thought that unless he was supported by the divine assistance, he could not resist such enemies. Vita Alfredi, p. 24.

CHAP.

L

871.

Alfred accedes.

the field of defeat, dropping with a brother's blood; and accordingly, when Alfred accepted it, he began a new life of anxiety, shaded for some time with the deepest gloom of misfortune.

The fiercest and most destructive succession of conflicts which ever saddened a year of human existence, distinguished that of Alfred's accession with peculiar misery. With their own population, the West Saxons maintained eight pitched battles against the Northmen, besides innumerable skirmishes by day and night, with which the nobles and royal officers endeavoured to check their depredations. Many thousands of the invaders fell, but new fleets of adventurers were perpetually shading the German Ocean with their armaments, who supplied the havoc caused by the West Saxon swords.*

Alfred's
defeat, and
first peace.

Within a month after Alfred's accession, the Danes attacked his troops at Wilton,⁵ in his absence, with such superiority of force, that all the valour of patriotism could not prevent defeat. Wearied with these depopulating conflicts, Alfred made a peace with his enemies, and they quitted his dominions.⁶

Northmen
conquer
Mercia;

874.

The invaders marched to London, and, wintering there, threatened Mercia. Burrhed, its king, twice negotiated with them; but at last, disregarding all treaties, they entered Mercia, and wintered at Repton in Derbyshire, where they destroyed the celebrated monastery, the sacred mausoleum of all the Mercian kings.⁷ Burrhed quitted his throne, and, leaving his people to the mercy of the invaders, went disgrace-

* Asser, 25. Flor. Wig. 311. Hoveden, 417. The year 871 is noted as the beginning of Alfred's reign by Asser, the Saxon Chronicle, Mailros, Hoveden, Sim. Dun. and some others. But Ingulf, 25. Malmsb. 42. and Petrib. 21. place his accession in 872.

⁵ Bromton, 809, in a mistake, puts down Walton in Sussex. But Asser, whom the other chronicles follow, says, Wilton is on

the north bank of the river Guilou, from which the whole country is named, p. 25. Guilou means the meandering river.

⁶ Asser, 25. Ethelw. 844.

⁷ Monasterium que celeberrimum, omnium regum Merciorum sacratissimum mausoleum funditus destruxissent. Ingulf, 26.

fully to Rome, where he soon died, and was buried in the English school.⁸

CHAP.
I.

874.

The Danes gave the Mercian crown to Ceolwulf, an officer of Burrhed's court: his capacity was contracted; his disposition mischievous; he swore fidelity to his foreign masters; paid them tribute, and promised to return the power they granted, whenever they required. He plundered the poor peasantry, robbed the merchants, and oppressed the unprotected and the clergy; on the wretched monks of the destroyed abbey of Croyland, he barbarously imposed a tax of a thousand pounds. But this pageant of tyranny displeased his masters; he was stripped of every thing, and he perished miserably.⁹ With him ended for ever the Anglo-Saxon octarchy. The kingdom of Mercia never existed again. When the Danish power declined, it was associated by Alfred inseparably to Wessex.¹⁰

England was now become divided between two powers, the West Saxons, and the Northmen, who had subdued all the rest of the island.

The largest part of the Danish army, under their three kings, Godrun, Oskitul, and Amund, marched from Repton to Cambridge, where they wintered, and resided twelve months; while another division of their forces proceeded to Northumbria and Bernicia, under Halfden, to complete the conquest of this kingdom. As yet they had subdued no more of it than Deira. His calamitous invasion subdued the whole kingdom of Northumbria, and harrassed the Strathcluyd Britons.¹¹ Scotland attempted to withstand them, but failed.¹² Halfden, having

⁸ Asser, 26. Ingulf, who in general is a very valuable authority, here makes a small confusion of dates; he says, Burrhed fled in 874, while Alfred was tarrying in Etheling island. This is not correct. Alfred did not seclude himself till four years afterwards.

⁹ Ing. 27.

¹⁰ Ing. 27. He says, that from the first

year of Penda, to the deposition of Ceolwulf, the Mercian throne had lasted about 230 years.

¹¹ Ethelwerd, 844. Asser, 27.

¹² Sax. Chron. 83.

¹³ "The Picts attack the Dubh-gals; the Picts are defeated with great slaughter." Ann. Ulster, 65. These annals notice some dissensions of the Northmen.

BOOK
IV.

876.

They attack
Alfred. His
second peace.

completed the conquest of Bernicia, divided it amongst his followers, and tilled and cultivated it.¹⁴

The three kings, who had wintered at Cambridge, began their hostilities against Wessex. Leaving their positions at night, they sailed to Dorsetshire, surprized the castle of Wareham, and depopulated the country round. Alfred negotiated with them, to leave his dominions; and he had the impolicy to use money as his peace-maker.¹⁵ They pledged themselves by their bracelets, the oath most sacred to their feelings, and which they had never plighted before.¹⁶ But Alfred exacted also an oath on Christian relics. We may smile at the logic of the king, who thought that a Christian oath would impose a stronger obligation on Pagan minds, or that the crime of perjury was aggravated by the formalities of the adjuration.

To punish Northmen by the impositions of oaths, or by hostages, which appear to have been reciprocal,¹⁷ was to encourage their depredations by the impunity which attended them. It was binding a giant with a rush, an eagle with a cobweb. Accordingly, in a night quickly succeeding the peace-making solemnity, they rushed clandestinely on the king's forces, and slew all his horsemen.¹⁸ They used the steeds to mount a part of their army, which rode immediately to Exeter, and remained there for the winter.¹⁹

877.

Alfred's naval
successes.

The small advantage which the ships of Alfred had obtained over a few Danish vessels, induced him to cause long ships and

¹⁴ Sax. Chron. 84. In 876, the Annals of Ulster place the death of Halfden. "Battle at Lochruan between the Fin-gáls and Dubh-gáls, where the latter lost Halfdan, their captain." p. 65.

¹⁵ Ethelwerd, 844. In this year Alfred attacked the Danes by sea. His ships, meeting six of theirs, took one and dispersed the others. Asser, 27.

¹⁶ Asser, 28. Their bracelets were highly valued by them, and always buried with them. See Bartholin. 499—503. Joannes Tinmuth says, they were nobilitatis indicium. Hist. MSS. cited by Dugdale, 1. p. 256. and see Aimon, p. 371, 385.

¹⁷ I infer this, because, in mentioning Alfred's complete and final conquest of Gutdun, Asser says, he exacted hostages, but gave none. Ille nullum eis daret, p. 34. He adds, that this was unusual. Ita tamen qualiter nunquam cum aliquo pacem ante pepigerant.

¹⁸ Asser, 28.

¹⁹ Named by the Britons, *Caer Wisc*; by the Saxons, *Eaxanceastre*. It is, continues Asser, on the eastern bank of the river *Wisc*, near the southern sea, which flows between Gaul and Britain.

galleys to be built at the ports of his kingdom; and, as his countrymen were less competent to navigate them, he manned them with such piratical foreigners as would engage in his service.²⁰ They were appointed to cut off all supplies from his invaders. They met 120 ships hastening from Wareham, to relieve their countrymen. They flew to arms with the same alacrity with which they prosecuted all their enterprizes. The Northmen, half ruined already by a stormy voyage, waged a fruitless battle; their hosts perished, and of their steeds of the ocean, to adopt their favourite metaphor, one hundred and twenty were destroyed at the rock of Swanwick, on the coast of Hampshire.²¹

Alfred collected his troops, and marched against the Danes in Exeter; but they possessed themselves of the castle before he reached it, and his military skill was unable or unwilling to assault or to besiege it. He contented himself with exacting new hostages and new oaths, that they should depart from his kingdom.²²

The conduct of Alfred, in the first years of his reign, seems to have been imprudent. Instead of a system of vigilance and vigour, against his enemies, we find nothing but inert quietude, temporizing pacifications, and transient armaments. The only plan discernible in the first seven years of his reign, was to gain momentary repose. An interval of tranquillity was certainly obtained; but it was a delusive slumber on the precipice of fate.

²⁰ Asser's expressions are "Impositis que piratis in illis vias maris custodiendas commisit." p. 29.

²¹ The printed copy of Asser, besides this defeat, makes 120 also to perish in a storm.

I follow Matt. West. 328, who consolidates the two incidents into one. Flor. Wig. 315. Sax. Ch. 83. Ethelw. 845. and Hunt. 350. mention only one loss of 120 vessels.

²² Asser, 28.

C H A P. II.

*Alfred becomes a Fugitive.*BOOK
IV.

878.

Northmen
enter Wilts.Alfred's
flight.

THE locusts of the Baltic, to use the expressive metaphor of the chronicles, having spread themselves over part of Mercia in the preceding August, and being joined by new swarms, advanced again into Wessex; and in January took possession of Chippenham in Wiltshire, where they passed the winter, and from which they made excursive ravages over the adjacent country. On this decisive invasion, many of the inhabitants emigrated in penury and terror to other regions. Some fled over sea, and to France; the rest, overawed by the cavalry of the invaders, submitted to their dominion, and Alfred was compelled to become a fugitive.¹

These circumstances, which every chronicle states or implies, are so extraordinary, that it is difficult to comprehend them. The Danes invade Wessex, the country falls undefended into their hands, and Alfred preserves his life by such a concealment, that his friends were as ignorant as his enemies both of his residence and fate.² Such became his distress, that he knew not where to turn;³ such was his poverty, that he had even no subsistence but that which by furtive or open plunder he could extort, or by fishing and hunting obtain.⁴ He wandered about in woods and marshes in the greatest penury,

¹ Asser, 30. Sax. Chron. 84. Ethelw. 845. Matt. West. 329. Hunt. 350. Asserii Annales, 166. Alur. Bev. 105. Walling. 537. and others.

² Quare ergo idem sæpedictus Ælfredus in tantam miseriam sæpius incidit ut nemo sub-jectorum suorum sciret, ubi esset vel quo de-venisset. Asser, 32. So Asserii Annales, 166. So Flor. Wig.

³ At rex Ælfredus tactus dolore cordis intrinsecus, quid ageret, quo se verteret ignorabat. Matt. West. 329.

⁴ Nihil enim habebat quo uteretur, nisi quod a paganis et etiam a Christianis qui se paganorum subdiderant dominio, frequentibus irruptionibus aut clam, aut etiam palam sub-traheret. Asser, 30. Flor. Wig.

sometimes with a few companions; sometimes, for greater secrecy, alone.⁵ He had neither territory, nor, for a time, the hope of regaining any.⁶

CHAP.

II.

878.

To find Alfred and the country in this distress, and at the same time to remark, that no battles are mentioned to have occurred between the arrival of the Northmen at Chippenham, and the flight of the king, or the subjection of the country, are circumstances peculiarly perplexing. It is not stated on this invasion, as it is on every other, that Alfred collected an army, and resisted the Northmen; that he retired at the head of his forces, though defeated; that he posted himself in any fortress,⁷ or that he took any measures to defend the country against its enemies. They invade in January; between that month and the following Easter, a very short period, all this disaster occurred.

The power of the Danes may have been formidable, but it had never been found by Alfred to be irresistible; and the events of a few months proved that it was easily assailable. When they attacked his brother, they met a resistance which has been recorded. When they attacked himself in the preceding years, his means of opposition, though not vigorous, are yet noticed. But on this invasion, a most remarkable silence occurs as to any measures of defence. As far as we can penetrate into such an obscured incident, we can discern none; nothing appears but panic and disaffection in the people; inactivity and distress in the king.

Before Alfred, from a respected sovereign, would have become a miserable fugitive, we should expect to read of mighty battles. If defeated in one county, we should look for him in another; always with an army, or in a fortress; always withstanding the fierce enemies who assaulted him.

⁵ Asser, 30. Hunt. 350. Mailros, 144. Chron. Sax. 84. Matt. West. 329. Sim. Dun. 18, 71. defence in Kynwith, and Alfred's subsequent fortification in Ethelingey, shew how such a retreat would have protected the country.

⁶ Alur. Bev. 105.

⁷ This was remarkable, because Odun's Hoveden says, that his ministers retired to Kynwith, p. 417.

BOOK
IV.

878.

Its cause in-
vestigated.

What overwhelmed Alfred with such distress? What drove him so easily from his throne? It could not be, as Sir John Spelman intimates, that the Saxons "were before quite spent and done," because it is not true, that in 876 they fought "seven desperate battles."⁸ These battles are placed by the unanimous agreement of every reputable chronicler with Asser, the friend of the king, in the last year of Ethelred's reign, and the first of Alfred's. Since that period, though the king sometimes headed armies, no sanguinary conflict is mentioned to have ensued in Wessex. Seven years had now elapsed without one important struggle; the strength of West Saxony was therefore unimpaired, because one third of the juvenile population, at Alfred's accession, would, in 878, have attained the age of courageous manhood.

That the arrival of new supplies from the Baltic, could not have "broken the spirits of the Saxons" so suddenly, and have "reduced them to despair," is probable, because the West Saxons had not, for the last seven years, "undergone a miserable havock in their persons and property," and had exerted no "vigorous actions in their own defence." So far from being reduced to the necessity of despair, we shall find that a single summons from their king, when he had recovered his self-possession, was sufficient to bring them eagerly into the field, though the undisputed occupation of the country for several months must have rendered hostility far less availing than before. The king is not stated to have troubled them with exhortations, to defend "their prince, their country, and their liberties,"⁹ before he retired. And it is remarkable, that the foes whom he had left at Chippenham, he found near Westbury, when he made the effort which produced his restoration. Amid all the confusion, emigration, and dismay, which his seclusion must have produced, twenty miles composed the extent of their intermediate progress. The invaders,

⁸ See his plain but learned and useful life of Alfred, p. 53, and 50. Hearne's ed. Hume has the same error, p. 79. ed. 1789.

⁹ This is our Hume's statement, p. 79, 80.

whose conquests, when unresisted, were so circumscribed, and whose triumphs were afterwards destroyed by one well directed effort, could not have exhibited that gigantic port, which intimidates strength into imbecility, and ensures destruction, by annihilating the spirit that might avert it.

To understand this obscure incident, it is necessary to notice some charges of misconduct which have been made against Alfred. The improprieties alluded to, are declared to have had political consequences, and have been connected with his mysterious seclusion. It may be most impartial to review the traditional imputations in all their extent, and then to consider, from the confessions of Asser, how much it is reasonable to believe, or to reject.

Misconduct
imputed to
Alfred.

An ancient life of Saint Neot, a kinsman of Alfred, exists in Saxon,¹⁰ which alludes, though vaguely, to some impropriety in the king's conduct. It says, that Neot chided him with many words, and spoke to him prophetically: "O king, much shalt thou suffer in this life; hereafter so much distress thou shalt abide, that no man's tongue may say it all. Now, loved child, hear me if thou wilt, and turn thy heart to my counsel. Depart intirely from thine unrighteousness, and thy sins with alms redeem, and with tears abolish."

Another life of Saint Neot¹¹ is somewhat stronger in its expressions of reproach. It states, "that Neot, reproving

¹⁰ It is in MS. in the Cotton Library, Vespasian, D. 14. intituled, "Vita Sancti Neoti Saxonice." It follows an account of Furseus, an East Anglian Saint, and some religious essays of Elfric, all in Saxon. As Elfric wrote the lives of many Saints in Saxon, it is very probably his composition.

¹¹ After mentioning that Alfred came to Neot, emb his sawle thearfe, it adds, he hine eac threade manega worden, and him to cw' mid fore witegunge. "Eala thu king, mycel scealt thu tholigen on thyssen life, on than towearden time swa micle angsumnysse thu gebiden scealt tha nan mænnisc tunge hit eall asecgen ne mæg. Nu leof bearn gehor

me gyf thu wylt and thine heorte to mine rede gecerre. Gewit eallinge fram thinra unricht-wisnysse, and thine synnen mid ælmesen ales et mid tearen adigole." MSS. Vesp. p. 145. From Asser's expressions (ut in Vita Sancti patris Neoti legitur) p. 30, it seems that a life of Neot had been written before Asser died. The Saxon life above quoted seems to be an epitome of some more ancient one. In this manner Elfric epitomized Abbo's life. See MSS. Julius, E. 7.

¹² This is a MS. in the Cotton Library, Claudius, A. 5. It is in Latin, and is intituled, "Vita Sancti Neoti per Will. Abbatem Croylandensem, an. 1180."

his bad actions, commanded him to amend; that Alfred, not having wholly followed the rule of reigning justly, pursued the way of depravity:¹³ That one day when the king came, Neot sharply reproached him for the wickedness of his tyranny, and the proud austerity of his government. That Neot foretold his misfortunes. "Why do you glory in your misconduct? though you are exalted in iniquity, you shall not continue; you shall be bruised like the ears of wheat; where then will be your pride?"¹⁴

Matthew of Westminster also inculpates forcibly some faults of Alfred: he affirms, that Neot, amid other familiar conversation, reproached him for his bad actions, warned him of their future punishment, and foretold his misfortunes. "You shall be harrassed by the Pagans in this kingdom, in which you swell and exercise a tyranny so immoderate; you shall be a fugitive for some time, because your sins exact it. But if you repent of your cruel actions and inordinate passions, you shall find mercy."¹⁵

Another writer of a chronicle asserts, that Alfred, in the beginning of his reign, indulged in luxury and vice, and that the amendment of his conduct, was a consequence of his adversity.¹⁶

These statements, considered by themselves, have neither that authenticity nor distinctness which ought to prevail against Alfred's acknowledged virtues. To know how far they are connected with truth, we must investigate the admissions of Asser. His evidence on such a subject is of the highest impression. He was Alfred's confidential friend; he loved

¹³ *Pravos etiam ejus redarguens actus jussit in melius converti — nondum ad plenum recte regnandi normam assecutus, viam desererat pravitatis. Claud. 154.*

¹⁴ *Quadam denique die solemniter venientem ex more de tyrannidis improbitate et de superba regiminis austeritate acriter eum increpavit Neotus. — Apponebat ei sanctum David — regum mansuetissimum et omnibus humilitatis exemplar — afferebat et Saulem*

superbia reprobaturum. — Spiritus attactus prophetico futura ei prædixit infortunia. "Quid gloriaris," inquit, "in malitia? Quid in iniquitate, elevatus es ad modicum et non subsistes et sicut summitates spicarum conteris. Ubi est gloriatio tua, &c." MSS. Claud. p. 154.

¹⁵ *Matt. West. 330.*

¹⁶ *Wallingford, 535, 536.*

his royal master, and would certainly never have overstated his faults.

Asser avows his belief, that the king's adversity was *not unmerited*.¹⁷ The reason which he adduces for his opinion is, that "in the first part of his reign, while yet a young man, and governed by a youthful mind, when the men of his kingdom and his subjects came to him, and besought him in their necessities; when they who were oppressed by power, implored his aid and patronage, he would not hear them; he conceded no assistance, he treated them as of no estimation."¹⁸

Asser continues to state, that "Saint Neot, who was then living, his relation, deeply lamented this, and foretold that the greatest adversity would befall him. But Alfred paid no attention to his admonitions, and treated the prediction with disdain."¹⁹

The guarded expressions of the bishop, writing to his living sovereign, whom he highly venerated, prevent us from deciphering more clearly the exact nature of Alfred's offence. As far as he goes, however, he gives some confirmation to the traditions which we have also quoted. He confesses some misconduct in the discharge of the king's royal functions. And, as he adds, that Alfred's punishment was so severe in this world, that his insipientia, his folly, might not be chastised hereafter,²⁰ we may presume that the fault was of magnitude, though he has not very clearly explained it.

CHAP.
II.

878.

Asser's evidence.

¹⁷ Quam siquidem adversitatem præfato regi illatum non immerito ei evenisse credimus. Asser, p. 31.

¹⁸ Quia in primo tempore regni sui, cum adhuc juvenis erat, animo que juvenili detentus fuerat, homines sui regni sibi que subiecti, qui ad eum venerant, et pro necessitatibus suis eum requisierant, et qui depressi potestatibus erant, suum auxilium ac patrocinium implorabant; ille vero noluit eos audire nec aliquod auxilium impendebat, sed omnino eos nihili pendebat, p. 31.

¹⁹ Quod beatissimus vir Neotus adhuc vi-

vens in carne qui erat cognatus suus intime corde doluit; maximamque adversitatem ab hoc ei venturam spiritu prophetico plenus prædixerat. Sed ille et piissimam viri Dei correptionem parvi pendebat et verissimam ejus prophetiam non recipiebat. Asser, 32.

²⁰ Quia igitur quicquid ab homine peccatur aut hic aut in futuro necesse est ut quolibet modo puniatur; noluit verus et pius judex illam regis insipientiam esse impunitam in hoc seculo quatenus illi parceret in districto judicio. Asser, 32.

BOOK
IV.

878.

The prophetic spirit of Neot could be nothing but his sagacity. The king's neglect of the complaints and sufferings of his subjects, may have made him unpopular, and Neot may have foreseen the calamities which would result from the displeasure of the people. The activity and power of the Danes could not be resisted with success, without the highest zeal and alacrity of the Saxon people. But if Alfred, by treating their grievances with contempt, had alienated their affections, the strongest fortress of his throne was sapped.

The probable
cause.

In considering this subject, we must, in justice to Alfred, remember, that all his errors were confined to the first part of his reign, and were nobly amended. It is also fair to state, that the imputed neglect of his people must not be hastily attributed to a tyrannical disposition, because it may be referred to circumstances which better suit his authentic character. It may have arisen from the intellectual disparity between himself and his people. When men begin to acquire knowledge, they sometimes encourage a haughty self-opinion, a craving fondness for their favourite pursuit, and an irritable impatience of every interruption. This hurtful temper, which disappears as the judgment matures, may have accompanied Alfred's first acquisitions of knowledge; and such feelings could only be exasperated, when the duties of his office called him from his studies and meditations into a world of barbarians, who despised books and bookmen, with whom his mind could have no point of contact, whose ignorance provoked his contempt, and whose habits, perhaps, excited his abhorrence.

Alfred de-
serted by his
subjects.

Asser connects with the hints about his faults, an intimation, that in this important crisis of his life, he suffered from the disaffection of his subjects. It is expressed obscurely, but the words are of strong import. He says, "the Lord permitted him to be very often wearied by his enemies, afflicted by adversity, and to be depressed *by the contempt of his people.*"²¹ He

²¹ Verum etiam ab hostibus fatigari, adversitatibus affligi, *despectu suorum deprimi*, multotiens eum idem benignus dominus permisit, p. 31.

adds to these phrases, the paragraphs already quoted about his faults, and ends the subject by declaring, "*Wherefore* he fell often into such misery, that none of his subjects knew where he was, or what had befallen him."²²

CHAP.

II.

878.

Asser had already declared, that on the invasion of Godrun, many fled into exile; and that, "for the greatest part, all the inhabitants of that region submitted to his dominion."²³ The inference which seems naturally to result from all his passages is, that Alfred had offended his people, and in this trying emergency was deserted by them. Other authors also declare, that it was their flight which produced his.²⁴

²² Quare ergo idem sæpedictus Ælfredus in tantam miseriam sæpius incidit, ut nemo subjectorum suorum sciret, ubi esset vel quo devenisset, p. 32.

²³ Asser, p. 30.

²⁴ The chronicle of Mailros says, that Alfred *fugientibus suis* cum paucis relictus est et in memoribus se abscondebat, p. 144. Wallingford says, Rex vero Ealfredus elegit prophetiæ spiritui cedere quam cum certo suorum dissidio sævientibus occursare. Ingulf declares, that ad tantam tandem exilitatem deductus est ut tribus pagis Hamtoniensi,

Wiltoniensi, et Somersata *ægre in fide* retentis, p. 26. So Malmsbury, p. 43.

The Latin life of Saint Neot says, Rex autem Aluredus audiens barbaricam rabiem atque sævitiam cominus irruiisse suorumque *considerans dispersionem* huc illucque cæpit animo fluctuare. MSS. Claud. 157. The Saxon life states, Tha Ælfred king the we ær embe spæcon tha of axode tha se here swa stithlic wæs, and swa neh engle lande he soné forwyrht fleames cepte and his cempen ealle forlet and his hertogen and eall his theode, madmes and madmfaten and his life gebearh. MSS. Vesp. p. 146.

Matt. West. 330. The Saxon life of St. Neot says, and on some swains here his birow gerinde and eac swetes him and his stle wite georne berde. MSS. Vesp. D. 14. p. 146.

MSS. Claud.

Matt. West. 330. MSS. Claud. Forde the laste geond þeges et weges, geond wæges and wædes swa tha he thurh þeges wæmnes geond becom to æthelingege. MSS. Vesp. D. 14. p. 146. MSS. A. 5. p. 137. MSS. Claud. 15. Matt. West. p. 330. and see Asser, p. 30 and Higden, 20.

C H A P. III.

*His Conduct during his Seclusion.*BOOK
IV.

878.

His flight in
disguise.His asylum
at a swine-
herd's;whose wife
he offends.

HE left his seat of royalty in the disguise of a common soldier, and quitting his companions,¹ for the sake of secrecy, he fled into the woods. He continued to travel, hiding himself in the wilds and hedges through which he passed.² He knew not whither to go, nor whom to trust. He went on as accident led, or as exigency impelled him; and at last reaching Somersetshire, he found a place, insulated by marshes and water, which promised an asylum.³

In his wanderings, he beheld the humble cottage of a swineherd, and he entered it a lonely exile.⁴ To the natural questions, who he was, and why he was lurking in a place so unfrequented, he answered, that he was one of Alfred's attendants, who had fled from a fatal battle, and wanted concealment from pursuit. His intimation of distress interested the rude feelings of the peasant, and he was sheltered with hospitality for many days in the hovel, poor and unknown. It is even intimated, that he diligently served them.⁵

One Sunday, when the peasant had led his herd to their usual pasture, his wife prepared her fire to make their rustic bread, called loudas, against his return.⁶ Other domestic business requiring her attention, she committed her cakes to

¹ Matt. West. 330. MSS. Claud.² Ferde tha lutigende geond heges et weges, geond wudes and weldes swa tha he thurh godes wissungs gesund becom to æthelingege. MSS. Vesp. D. 14. p. 146.³ MSS. A. 5. p. 157.⁴ MSS. Claud. ib. Matt. West. p. 330. and see Asser, p. 30. and Higden, 30.⁵ Matt. West. 330. The Saxon life of St. Neot says, and on sumes swanes huse his hleow gernde and eac swylce him and his yfele wife georne herde. MSS. Vesp. D. 14. p. 146.⁶ MSS. Claud.

the care of the king, who sat furbishing his bow and arrows, perhaps intending to use them for the acquisition of food.⁷

Alfred, on whose mind reflections the most interesting must have been hourly pressing, forgot his allotted task, and suffered the bread to burn. The woman saw their fate, ran enraged to the fire, and poured out her invectives against the apparent soldier.⁸ She told him, she saw daily that he was a great eater, and commanded him to turn the cakes, to prevent them from being spoiled.⁹

These homely taunts must have sounded harshly to Alfred's haughty temper, but he was compelled to convert the vulgar effervescence to a moral utility: he heard with patience, and coerced his irritability.¹⁰ He subdued his angry passions so effectually, as to answer, mildly, that he should indeed be slothful, if he could not mind the little office." He applied himself with attention to the new and homely labour, and carefully baked his severe hostess's bread.¹¹

It is stated, that he afterwards munificently rewarded the hospitable peasant. He observed him to be a man of capacity; he recommended him to apply to letters, and to assume the ecclesiastical profession. He afterwards made him bishop of Winchester.¹²

His munificence to the peasant.

The solitude of his retreat must have concurred with his penury and mortifications to make him pensive and melancholy. It is in its distresses that arrogance learns to know its folly; that man feels his insignificance, and discerns the importance of others to his well being and even existence.

⁷ Asser, 30.

⁸ MSS. Claud.

⁹ Tha wearth tha yfele wif weringe astyred and cw' to than kinge eorre mode, "wend thu tha hlafes tha heo ne forbeornen fertham ic geseo deighamlice tha thu mycel ete eart." MSS. Vesp. Asser, 31.

¹⁰ Rex vero procaciter his que hujus modi lacesitus imperiis nullum ex adverso reddidit impatientiae verbum. MSS. Claud.

¹¹ Wallingf. 537.

¹² Wallingf. 537.—Exinde mulieris expergefactus litigiis coquendis panibus atque conservandis de cætero curam adhibuit. MSS. Claud. 157.

¹³ Malmsb. 242. Flor. Wig. 318. Matt. West. 332. Denulf died bishop of Winchester in 909. Sax. Chron. 102.

Humility, urbanity, philanthropy, decorum, and self-coercion, all the virtues which are requisite to produce the good will of our species, are among the offspring which nature has allotted to adversity, and which the wise and good have in every age adopted in their eclipse.¹⁴ The sequel of Alfred's reign, which was a stream of virtue and intelligence, attests that his fortunate humiliation disciplined his temper, softened his heart, and enlightened his understanding.

His measures to regain his throne, and to surround it with its natural and impregnable bulwark, the confidence of his people, were judicious and exemplary. An auspicious incident at this juncture occurred to fortify his courage, and to give reason to his hopes.

Ubbo's at-
tack in
Devonshire.

Ubbo, who, with his brothers Hingwar and Halfden, had conducted the fatal fleet to England, to avenge the death of their father, and who had distinguished himself in the massacre at Peterborough, had been harrassing the Britons in South Wales, where he had wintered. After much of that slaughter, which always attended their invasions, he returned with twenty-three ships to the English channel. Sailing by the north of Devonshire, the castle of Kynwith¹⁵ attracted his notice, where many of the king's servants had embraced the protection of the Earl of Devon. The place was unprovided with subsistence. It had no stronger fortification than a Saxon wall;¹⁶ but Ubbo found that its rocky situation made it impregnable against all assault, except at the eastern point. He also remarked that no water was near it, and consequently that a short siege would reduce the inhabitants to every misery of thirst and famine. He preferred the certain victory of a

¹⁴ "I honour solitude, the meditating sister of society, and often her legislator, who converts the experience of active life into principles, and its passions into nutritious juices." Herder's *Outlines of the Philosophy of the History of Man*, p. 511. Eng. ed. 1800.

¹⁵ Risdon places this castle near Aplemore; it is called Henny Castle. 1 Gough's *Camden*, p. 40.

¹⁶ Asser seems to treat Saxon fortifications with some contempt; for he says, that it was omnino immunitam nisi quod mœnia nostro more erecta solum modo haberet. p. 32.

blockade to a bloody attack, and surrounded it with his followers.

CHAP.
III.

878.

Odun saw the extent of his distress, and the inevitable certainty on which the pagans calculated; and determined on a vigorous sally. It was bravely executed. While the dawn was mingling with the darkness, Odun pierced at once to the tent of Ubbo, slew him and his attendants, and turning on the affrighted host, made 1,200 the companions of their expiring commander; a few reached their vessels, and escaped. An immense booty rewarded the victors, among which the capture of their magical standard, the famous Reafan, was to the eye of ignorant superstition a more fatal disaster than even Ubbo's death, and their destructive defeat."

When Easter had passed, Alfred, now twenty-eight years of age, began to execute his new scheme of operations. The place of his retreat was peculiarly fitted to be made a military post of the most defensible nature. It was a small spot of firm land, a few acres in extent, environed by water and impassable marshes, which the conflux of the Perrot and the Thone had produced. It contained a wood of alders, which abounded with stags and goats. There was no access but by small vessels.

Alfred's
retreat de-
scribed.

He chanced to meet some of his people, fugitives like himself, to whom he became known. They acquiesced in his plans. A long bridge, very laboriously constructed, was made to afford an easier entrance to one part of his retreat; and upon the western end of the bridge they built a strong fort, which made hostile approaches impracticable."

Joined by
others.

¹⁷ Asser, 32. Flo. Wig. 316. The Sax. Chron. makes the number of the slain eight hundred and forty. Asser describes the raven as a banner woven by Ubbo's sisters, the daughters of Lodbrog, in one noon-tide. It was believed that the bird appeared as if flying when the Danes were to conquer, but was motionless when they were to be defeated. Asser adds, et hoc sæpe probatum

est, p. 33. He might have said that nothing was easier to be contrived. Bartholin has collected some traditions concerning such standards, and the raven's prophetic powers. p. 472—480.

¹⁸ MSS. Claud. p. 157. Asser, 60. Matt. West. 329. Malmsb. 255. A jewel of gold, enamelled like a bulla or amulet, to hang round the neck, circumscribed, Ælfred meg

BOOK
IV.

878.

Their excursive warfare.

Having secured the place of his residence, he increased the number of the companions of his fortunes, and began an excursive warfare against the enemy. It would seem that his wife and family joined him. His friends supported themselves in their retreat, by hunting, fishing, and depredation. Few in number, but formidable from their union and vigour, they assailed the invaders whenever opportunity tempted, or surprise promised to discomfit. Their small band was so inferior to the barbaric multitude, that their first attempts were not crowned with great success; but defeat only augmented their prudence, and called new energies into action. Gradually their numbers increased, and their hope of victory sometimes procured it. Retiring into their unknown asylum, with a celerity which baffled pursuit, when repulsed by superior force, they soon harrassed the enemy with hostility in a distant quarter. By day and by night, from woods and marshes, they were ever rushing on the Northmen with all the advantages of selection and surprise.

Its benefits.

By these expeditions Alfred provided himself and his party with sustenance; he inured himself to war and skilful generalship; he improved in his knowledge of the country, secured the attachment of his friends, provided new resources of character for his future life, collected perpetual intelligence of the motions of the Danes, revived the spirit of the country, and prepared it for that grand exploit which was soon to crown his labours.¹⁹

During his residence in this fenny isle, an incident occurred, which, as the monks are particular in recording it as a proof of the improvement of his disposition, we shall venture to recite, though without those additions of celestial machinery with which the tenants of the cloister seem to have been as warmly enamoured as any possessor of the epic laurel.

heft gewyrca, i. e. *Alfred ordered me to be made*, was found here. It is now in the Ashmolean Museum. 1 Gough's Camden, 70. It is engraved in that work, p. 59, and elsewhere.

¹⁹ All these circumstances are collected from the MSS. Claud. 157, 158. Ethelw. 845. Asser, 30. Sim. Dun. 18, 71. Ailred, 353. and Wallingf. 537.

His friends were abroad in search of food. The king was alone, reading, as his custom was, the books of scripture, and the annals of his country, or the actions of illustrious men. He was interrupted by a feeble knock at his gate, and by the lowly cry of poverty supplicating relief. He remembered the state of penury in which he had reached the same spot: he laid down his book, and called his wife to give the poor claimant some food. The queen found only one loaf in their store, which would not suffice for their family on their return from their toilsome expedition. Alfred thought the necessities of the mendicant more urgent than their own, and reserving a part of the pittance for his friends, he presented the man of poverty with the rest.²⁰

CHAP.
III.

878.

His charity.

²⁰ Ingulf. 26. Sim. Dun. 71. Ail. Riev. 353.

CHAP. IV.

*His Restoration.*BOOK
IV.

878.

He visits the
enemy's
camp.

AFTER several months of obscurity,¹ he formed a scheme for surprizing the great Danish army, which still continued in Wiltshire; and he resolved to inspect their encampments in person, that he might frame the plan, and appreciate the probability of its success. His early predilection for the arts of poetry and music had qualified him to assume the disguise of a harper: in this garb he went among the Danish tents. His harp and his talents excited notice; he was admitted to the royal tables, heard the secret counsels of his foes, and beheld their exposed position unsuspected.² He left the encampment, and reached Etheling isle in security.³ It was now Whitsuntide. He dispatched confidential messengers to his principal friends in the three adjacent counties, Wiltshire, Hampshire, and Somersetshire, announcing his existence, requiring them secretly to collect their followers, and to meet him in military array on the east of Selward Forest.⁴

¹ Mr. Walker, in his notes to Sir John Spelman's Life of Alfred, computes, that Alfred's seclusion did not last six months. Chippenham was taken in January, and the great battle which produced his restoration was fought seven weeks after Easter. Easter day was in that year the 23d of March; p. 30. The seventh week after that would of course be the 11th of May, which does not allow the retreat to have been five months.

² A part of Mr. Walker's curious note is worth translating: "Eddendun lies under Bratton-hill, which is lofty, abrupt, and of difficult ascent; on its summit there are yet extant the trenches and ditches of the Danish

camp. Two branches, for the sake of water, spread to the foot of the mountain. Here, weary of the confinement of a camp, and under no alarm of any hostile troops, the Danes diffused themselves to Eddendun, and over the neighbouring plain. It is probable that the king had notice of this descent, and resolved to examine the fact in person." Mr. Walker hints, that the king may have made his attack between their army and the hill, so as to separate them from their encampment. Not. Vit. Ælfredi, p. 33.

³ Ingulf. 26. Malmsb. 43. Higden, 258.

⁴ This was named in British Coit mawr, the great wood. Asser, 33. The county

As the Anglo-Saxons had suffered severely in his absence, the tidings of his re-appearance excited rapture in every breast. All who were intrusted with the secret, crowded enthusiastically to the place of meeting. Alfred met them at the stone of Egbert, on the east of the great wood, and was received with ardent congratulations. They encamped there for that night; at the next dawn he marched them to Eglea,⁵ where at night they again encamped. They rose, when the morning tints diffused their gleams of light, and marched rapidly to Eddinton, near Westbury, where the Northern myriads overspread the plains.

The Anglo-Saxons rushed on their enemies with an impetuosity which disordered valour was unable to withstand. It was Alfred who led them on; who seemed to have risen from his grave, to destroy them. Astounded at his name and presence; surprized in all the carelessness of fancied security, the Danes could only oppose with the confused efforts of haste and disorder. But these were unavailing. The plain was strewn with their hosts; part fled to a neighbouring fortification, and Alfred was left the master of that important field, which, from the marshes and penury of Ethelingey, exalted him to the throne of England.⁶

The battle at
Eddinton.

The king, with vigorous judgment, followed the Northmen to their fortress; and, contrary to their hopes, encamped himself strongly round it. By this decisive measure he cut them off from all reinforcement, and confined them to the scanty subsistence which happened to be in their station. While the siege lasted, the strength of Alfred augmented in

Its success.

(perhaps from the wood) was anciently called Sealwudscire. Ethelw. p. 837. The wood reaches from Frome to Burhain, near fifteen miles in length, and six in breadth. ¹ Gough's Camden, 78.

⁵ Probably the village now called Leigh. Gough's Camden, 100.

⁶ Asser, 34. Mr. Gough remarks, that on the south-west face of the hill, near Edindon, there is a most curious monument unnoticed

by bishop Gibson. It is a white horse, in a walking attitude, cut out of the chalk, fifty-four feet high, from his toe to his chest, and to the tip of his ear, near one hundred feet high, and from ear to tail one hundred feet long. The learned editor of Camden thinks, that it was made to commemorate this celebrated victory, p. 100, 101. The other white horse has been mentioned before.

a proportion which destroyed in the Danes every hope of emancipation. They lingered in unavailing distress for fourteen days, and then, oppressed with cold and famine, and worn down by fatigue and dismay, the imprisoned chiefs humbly supplicated the mercy of their conqueror.⁷

Thus, after a very doubtful struggle for the sovereignty of the island, after twelve years of peril and calamity, the Anglo-Saxons rose triumphant over their enemies.

The immediate conditions which Alfred imposed, were, hostages, which were not reciprocal, and oaths that they should leave his dominions. These, however, were of puerile importance, because Godrun, having got released from his confinement, might have acted with the same contempt of diplomatic and religious faith, for which his countrymen were notorious. Alfred had learnt that oaths and hostages were but bonds of sand, and therefore relied no longer upon these.

The comprehensive mind of Alfred conceived and executed the magnanimous policy of subduing the minds of Godrun and his followers to the peaceful obligations of agriculture, civilization, and Christianity. To effect this, he required them to exchange their Paganism for the Christian religion, and he admitted them to cultivate and possess East Anglia.

After some weeks, Godrun, to whom the conditions were acceptable, went with thirty of his chiefs to Aulre,⁸ near Ethelney, where Alfred, acting as his godfather, he was baptized in the name of Ethelstan. The ceremony was completed a week after at the royal town of Wædmor. He stayed twelve days with the king, as his guest, and received magnificent presents at his departure.⁹

⁷ Asser, 34. Flor. Wig. 317. Sax. Chron. 85.

⁸ Asser, 35. Mr. Walker thinks, it was the modern Aulre, an inconsiderable place near Ethelney. Wædmor was not less than

twelve miles from it. At Wædmor, the white garments and mystic veil, then appropriated to baptism, were given. Vit. Ælf. 35.

⁹ Asser, 35. Flor. 318. Matt. West. 331. Sax. Ch. 85.

Such a conversion could be but nominal ; but the religious tenets of the unreflective mass of mankind are little else. The object of Alfred was to place them immediately under new habits, which would give them dispositions more compatible with the well being of society than their ferocious Paganism. To time, reflection, and tuition, he left their further progress in the system he revered.

Godrun, to fulfil his engagements with Alfred, left Chippenham, and went into Gloucestershire. He remained at Cirencester¹⁰ a year, and then marching into East Anglia, he divided it among his soldiers, and they cultivated it."

Although the Northmen came to England as the ministers of vengeance ; yet, by residing in it for twelve years, they must have become more sensible to the charms of civilized life. The bands under Halfden attested this impression when they cultivated Northumbria. Having thus turned their swords into ploughshares, they gave no assistance to Godrun in his invasion of Wessex ; and if left unmolested, and not endangered, it was probable they would continue to be pacific. By admitting Godrun to imitate their example, Alfred calmed their inquietude ; and by giving this occupation to Godrun, he secured safety to himself ; the beginning change in the manners of the North, was cherished in its most important crisis ; and, as the Danes became civilized in East Anglia, they would inevitably, for their own safety, form a barrier defending the most exposed coast of the island from their more ferocious countrymen.¹¹

¹⁰ Cirrenceastre, qui Britannice Cairceri nominatur, quæ est in meridiana parte Huiciorum ; ibique per unum annum mansit. Asser, 35.

¹¹ Cirrenceastre deserens, ad orientales Anglos perrexit, ipsam que regionem dividens, capit inhabitare. Asser, 35. Here for se here of Cyrenceastre on East Engle, and gesæt, the lond, and gedælde. Sax. Chr. 86. This printed chronicle dates their occupation of East Anglia in 879. The MS.

chronicle places it, like Asser, in 880. Cot. Lib. Tib. B. 4. p. 35.

¹² Saxo places a Gormo Anglicus soon after Ragnar Lodbrog, p. 178. In the Chronicon of Eric he is surnamed Enske, the Englishman, and is there said to have been baptized in England. 1 Langb. 158. Hamsfort says, he went to England, and was converted by Alfred ; ib. p. 37. If so, he was the Godrun here mentioned.

C H A P. V.

*The Actions of Hastings, and his Invasions of England.
Alfred's Death.*BOOK
IV.

878.

ALFRED having permitted Godrun to colonize East Anglia, the limits of their respective territories were settled by a treaty, which still exists.¹ By the first article, the boundary was placed in the Thames, the river Lea to its source, and Watling Street to the Ouse.² The spaces thus marked, contained Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, part of Hertfordshire, part of Bedfordshire, and a little of Huntingdonshire.³ These regions were subjected to Godrun, and were filled with Danes.⁴ Northumbria was afterwards put under Guthred, who governed Deira; and Egbert ruled in Bernicia.⁵

¹ It is in Wilkins's *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*, p. 47. The beginning may be quoted as an intimation of the parties to such transactions: "This is the frythe tha Ælfred cyning and Guthrun cyning, and ealles Angel cynnes witan and eal seo theod the on East-Englum, beoth ealle gecweden habbath and mid athum gefæstnod for hi sylfe and for heora gingran ge for geborene, ge for ungeborene, the godes miltse recca oththe ure."

² The words are, "Ærest ymb ure land-gemera upon Temese, and thonne upon Ligan and andlang Ligan oth hire æwylm, thonne on geriht to Bedanforda, thon upon Usan oth Wætlingastret," p. 47.

³ Sir John Spelman places Northumbria also under Godrun, p. 66. He is certainly sanctioned by Malmsbury, p. 43; but Asser, 35. Florence, 328. Saxon Chron. 86. Ethelwerd, 845. Hunt. 350. Ingulf, 26. and Mailros, 144. unite in merely stating Godrun's occupation of East-Anglia. The grammar-

tical construction of the Saxon treaty appears to me to imply no more.

⁴ The other articles of the treaty are legal regulations. Spelman's Summary may be cited: "They provide that there shall be one and the same estimation of person, both of English and Dane, and the mulct for slaughter of them both alike. That a thane of the king's being questioned for manslaughter, or any offence above four marks, shall be tried by twelve of his peers, and others by eleven of their peers, and one of the king's men. That no buying of men, horse, or oxen, shall be justifiable without voucher of the seller, and his avowing the sale. And, lastly, that there shall be no licentious intercourse of the souldiers of the one with those of the other army," p. 68. Hearne's ed.

⁵ Mailros, 145. In 890, Godrun died in East Anglia, Flor. 328.; and Guthred in Northumbria died 894. Sim. Dun. 133, and 70. Mailros, 146.

The sovereignty of Mercia, on the defeat of the Danes,⁶ fell into the power of Alfred. He did not, however, avowedly incorporate it with Wessex. He discontinued its regal honors, and constituted Ethelred its military commander, to whom he afterwards married his daughter, Ethelfleda, when her age permitted.

The reign of Alfred, from his restoration to his death, was wise and prosperous. One great object of his care was, to fortify his kingdom against hostile attacks.⁷ He rebuilt the cities and castles which had been destroyed, and constructed new fortifications in every useful place. By these defensive precautions, he gave to the country a new face, and not only kept in awe the Northmen who were in it, but was prepared to wage, with advantage, that defensive war, which the means and disposition of the impetuous invaders could never successfully withstand.

The policy of Alfred's conduct towards Godrun was evinced and rewarded immediately afterwards. A large fleet of Northmen arrived in the Thames, who desired to unite with Godrun in a new warfare; but, Alfred having pacified his ambition, these adventurers found no encouragement and no alliance. They wintered at Fulham, and then followed their leader, the famous Hastings, into Flanders.⁸

Another attempt of the Northmen.

Alfred discerned the inestimable benefit to England of creating a naval armament for the protection of its coast. This king, who never used war but from necessity, which he deplored, may be considered as the founder of the English navy. In this, however, he was but the copyist of Charlemagne, whose policy of building ships to repress the northern invasions, has been noticed before.⁹ Alfred had already experienced the

⁶ Spelman thinks that the superior sovereignty of Alfred was preserved in his treaties with the Danes. He remarks from Malmsbury, that Alfred gave the dominion to Godrun, *ut eas sub fidelitate regis jure hereditario foveret*, and that the very joining in the laws shews that the one was a vassal, p. 69.

⁷ Ingulf, 27.

⁸ Asser, 35, 36. Malmsb. 43.

⁹ About this time kings seem to have thought of navies. In 888, Mahomet, the

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efficacy of a few ships of war. In 882, he was prepared to engage in a naval conflict, and took two ships. The chief of two others and the crews, exhausted by their wounds and exertions, submitted to him.¹⁰

884.
Another
attempt.

The army of the Northmen on the Scheld divided into two branches. One moved against Eastern France; the other invaded England, and besieged Rochester. They built a castle against its gate, but the valour of the citizens prolonged their defence, till Alfred, with a great army, approached to relieve them. On the king's sudden presence, the Pagans abandoned their tower, all the horses which they had brought from France, and the greatest part of their captives, and fled with precipitation to their ships. Compelled by extreme necessity, they returned in the same summer to France.¹¹

Alfred, improving the hour of success, directed his fleet, full of warriors, to the East Anglians. They met thirteen war ships of the Danes ready for battle. The Saxons attacked and took them, with all their booty; the crews fighting fiercely, till every one perished. But the Saxons forgot the suspicious vigilance which should always be maintained on an enemy's coast. The Danes gathered all their ships together, and, coming on the fleet of Alfred, which was at the mouth of the river, they obtained a victory of superiority or surprize.¹² The colonising followers of Godrun broke their treaty with Alfred; but as no account of the consequences is transmitted to us, the peace was probably soon restored.¹³

The most brilliant incident in the life of Alfred, was his defence of England against the formidable Hastings. In his

Saracen king in Corduba, ordered ships to be built at Corduba, Hispali, and in other places where wood abounded. Of this king it is said, that as he was walking in his garden, a soldier exclaimed, "What a beautiful place! What a delightful day! How charming would life be if death never came!" "You are wrong," answered Mahomet; "if death had never come, I should not have

reigned here." Rod. Tol. Hist. Arab. c. 28. p. 24.

¹⁰ Asser, 36.

¹¹ Ibid. 37.

¹² Asser, 38. The Cotton MSS. and the editions of Parker and Camden say, the English fleet dormiret. Florence, in relating the incident, substitutes the word rediret, p. 321.; and the Saxon Chron. p. 87, hamweard wendon.

¹³ Asser, 39.

struggles against the Northmen, over whom he prevailed at Eddinton, he had to oppose power rather than ability; but in resisting Hastings, he had to withstand a skilful veteran, disciplined in all the arts of war by thirty years practise of it; renowned for his numerous successes in other regions, and putting in action a mass of hostility, which might have destroyed a man of less ability than the Saxon king.

CHAP.
V.

Hastings must have long been a favourite of tradition, because he was one of those heroic and successful adventurers, whom popular fame loves to celebrate, and sometimes to fancy. Time has, however, so much to record, such numerous characters to perpetuate, that he suffers many to fall into the shroud of oblivion, of whom our curiosity would desire a distinct memorial. Hastings has scarcely survived the general lot.¹⁴ We know him but by a few imperfect fragments: they announce a character of high importance in his day, but they give us little acquaintance with his individual features.

Actions of
Hastings.

He first appears to us as selected by Ragnar Lodbrog, to initiate his son, Biorn, in the habit of piracy:¹⁵ that he possessed the virtues of a vikingr, intrepidity, activity, and ferocity, is evinced by the office which Ragnar assigned him.

He fulfilled his military duty with distinguished courage; for he led his young pupil into a collision with the Franks. To detail his successful depredations on this powerful nation,¹⁶ would be to repeat much of those descriptions, of which our own annals are so prolific.

Charles at last bought off his hostility, and the ambitious

¹⁴ Dudo has attempted to draw his character; but he has only recollected and applied to him thirty-two vituperative epithets from the Latin language, strung into hexameters. One of the historian's bright ideas is, that Hastings should be non atramento verum carbone notandus, p. 63.

¹⁵ Hastings had been the nutritus of Biorn. Ord. Vital. p. 458. Snorre gives a similar instance, in Olaf Helga's history. This

prince first began piracy at the age of twelve, under the tuition of Ran, his foster-father.

¹⁶ For his actions, see Gemmeticensis Hist. l. 2. c. 5. p. 218. Dudo, l. 1. c. 1. p. 63. Ord. Vitalis, l. 3. p. 458. The chronicles cited by Du Chesne, p. 25. and 32. of his Hist. Norm. Scriptores. The authorities vary much as to the year of the attack. Some place it in 843, others in 851.

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IV.

Northman is said to have formed the bold hope of conquering, for his master, the imperial dignity. To accomplish this project, he sailed to Italy,¹⁷ and, mistaking the city Luna¹⁸ for Rome, he attacked and obtained it. The geographical error, and his ignorance of the country, occasioned him to return.

He landed again in France,¹⁹ and from him and others, renewed destruction became its fate. The government was weak, and the country factious. Sometimes the assailants were bought off.²⁰ Sometimes the rivers were fortified to prevent their ingress.²¹ A general assembly of the powerful chiefs was in one year convened, to provide an united defence;²² and an edict was afterwards passed, awarding death to all who should give breast-plates, arms, or horses, to Northmen, even though it was to procure their own redemption.²³ But the particular actions of Hastings are not now to be traced, because, though the chronicles of France abound with depredations, they often omit the name of the commanding adventurer.

He appears to us, however, twice by name in the annals of Regino. Once in the year 867, as compelled to fortify himself in a church, sallying from which, he destroyed count Robert the Strong,²⁴ who has been called the greatest captain which France then had.²⁵ Again, in the year 874, as hovering

¹⁷ Chron. Turonense, p. 25. Du Chesne Script. Norm. Chron. Floriac. p. 32. ib. Dudo, p. 64. Gemmet. 220.

¹⁸ Luna is mentioned in Strabo, p. 339.

¹⁹ Dudo, p. 65. The Gesta Normannorum does not state when they returned from Italy, but mentions that, in 869, part returned to Italy, p. 3.

²⁰ In 869, Charles gave them 4,000 pounds of silver, and raised this sum by exacting six denarii from every manso ingenuili et de servili tres et de accolis unus et de duobus hospitibus unus et decima de omnibus quæ negotiatores videbantur habere. Gesta Norman. Du Ch. p. 3. So in 870, they obtained a great donation of silver, corn, wine, and cattle, p. 4. &c.

²¹ Ann. Bertiniani, an. 864.

²² In Junio 864, celebrantur Comititia Pistensia quo regem et proceres traxerat generalis necessitas instituendi munitiones contra Normannos. Capit. Reg. ap. 1 Lang. 558.

²³ Capit. Reg. ib. When the Pope Nicolaus cited the bishops of France, they excused themselves on account of the Northmen, 1 Lang. 568.

²⁴ Regino, p. 481. Pistor. Script. Germ.

²⁵ Cet fut ainsi que perit alors Robert le Fort le plus grand capitaine qu'il y eust alors en France. Daniel Hist. de France, v. 2. p. 99.

about Bretagne, and accepting a defiance from a celebrated Breton warrior, whose courage excited his admiration, and averted or deterred his hostility.²⁶

In 879 he was in England, at Fulham; but as Alfred had just defeated and calmed Godrun, he received no co-operation, and therefore sailed to Ghent,²⁷ and joined vigorously in those furious assaults by which the kingdom of France was for thirteen years again desolated, and endangered.²⁸

Defeated at length by the imperial forces, Hastings marched to Boulogne, and collecting there a fleet of 300 ships, he undertook to wrestle with Alfred for his throne.

893.

Fifteen years had now elapsed since the king's restoration, and he had wisely employed the interval in executing every scheme which his wisdom had formed, for the improvement and protection of his people. The sudden invasion of Hastings compelled him to abandon literature and ease, for an unremitting exertion of sagacity and courage.

Hastings attacked Alfred with peculiar advantages. As the Northmen were in possession of Northumbria and East Anglia, he had only to contend against the strength of Wessex and its dependencies. If his countrymen declined to assist him by their active co-operation, he was sure of their neutrality, and had every prospect of their secret connivance. He shaped his operation in conformity to this political situation. By not landing in East Anglia and Northumbria, he avoided the means of exciting their jealousy; and by directing his fleet to Kent, he was enabled to profit from their vicinity. If he were defeated, they might afford him a shelter; if successful, they could immediately assist.

²⁶ Regino, p. 55.

²⁷ It is Malmsbury who has affixed his name to this incident. Asser and others mention the arrival at Fulham, and the departure. Malmsbury says, "Cæteri ex Danis qui Christiani esse recusassent, cum Hastingo mare transiretaverunt ubi quæ mala fecerunt indignæ norunt," p. 43.

²⁸ During this period they were once de-

feated by Louis: a song, in the ancient Teutonic language, written at the time, on this victory, still exists. Their siege of Paris, and its defence in 886, is narrated in a curious poem of Abbo, who was in the scene of action, and who has transmitted to us a full description of the incident. It is in Du Chesne; and 2 Langb. 76—106.

Two hundred and fifty vessels sailed to the south-west coast of Kent, and landed near Romney-marsh, at the eastern termination of the great wood or weald of Anderida.²⁹ They drew up their ships to the Weald, four miles from the outward mouth of the river, and there attacked and mastered a fortification which the peasants of the country were constructing in the fens. They built a stronger military work at Apuldre, on the Rother.

Soon afterwards, Hastings himself appeared with the division he had selected to be under his own command, consisting of eighty ships, in the Thames. He navigated them into the East Swale, landed at Milton, near Sittingbourn, and threw up a strong entrenchment, which continued visible for ages.³⁰

This distribution of his forces was judicious. The two armies were but twenty miles asunder, and could therefore act separately, or combine for any joint operation which prudence or exigency should direct. The vicinity of their countrymen in Essex, secured them from any attacks on the right, and the sea was their frontier on the left. The fertile districts in the east part of Kent, became their spoil without a blow; and thus Hastings secured an ample supply, and a safe position, which courage and policy might convert into a kingdom.

While Alfred prepared for measures of active resistance, he endeavoured to bind the Northumbrians and East Anglians to peace, by oaths and hostages; but the sympathetic temptations to plunder, which the presence and situation of Hastings presented, overcame their young religion and their honour. When the armies of Hastings pervaded the country in occasional excursions, they joined in the enterprise, and sometimes they made aggressions themselves.³¹

²⁹ The Saxon Chronicle says, they landed at Limine muthan. p. 91. See Gibson, loc. expl. p. 34. and Gough's Camden, 1. p. 247. on the probable situation of this harbour.

³⁰ Sax. Chron. 92. Matt. West. 345.

³¹ Sax. Chron. 92. Flor. Wig. 329.

In this perilous conjuncture, Alfred, with cool judgment, distinguished the dangerous from the temporary attack. He neglected the East Anglians; he left the country which they could infest to the protection of its inhabitants, and the fortified cities which he had provided; and he encamped, with his collected army, between the two divisions of the Danes; a forest on the one side, and waters upon the other, protected his flanks, and gave security to his encampment.

By this judicious station he separated the invaders from the East Anglians, and at the same time kept asunder the two armies of the Northmen. He watched their movements, and was prepared to pour his avenging troops on either which should attempt to molest his people beyond the districts in which they resided. They sometimes endeavoured to plunder in places where the royal army was absent; but bands from the neighbouring cities, or Alfred's patrolling parties, chastized their ravages.

The king's discretion and activity awed even Hastings. It was so unlike the disorderly warfare which he had experienced in France, that for some time he seemed intimidated by an enemy whose strength was multiplied by his judgment. Alfred's position was too strong to be attacked without assured peril; and as the king despised the valour of temerity, he forbore to assault the Danes in their entrenchments. His hope was to acquire a certain victory from a Fabian caution, combined with a Fabian vigilance.

The plan of Alfred required the aid of time, and a permanent force: but the conditions of military service prevented the Saxon army from being perpetually in the field. To remedy this inconvenience, which would have robbed him of all the advantages he projected, Alfred divided his army into two bodies: of these, he called one to the warlike campaign, while the individuals of the other were enjoying peaceably

³² Sax. Chron. 92. Flor. 330.

their private occupations. After a reasonable service, the active portion was allowed to return home, and the rest quitted their domestic hearths to supply the place of their retiring countrymen.³³ Thus while he avoided every necessity of rushing to a precipitate attack, he always presented to the invaders a strong and undiminished force.

Surprized at this new phenomenon, Hastings and his confederates remained in their camps, discontented, coerced, and overawed. The East Anglians, who watched the motions of Hastings, forbore any material warfare while he remained inactive.

Weary of this destructive confinement, Hastings resolved to emancipate himself. At the same instant that he took to his shipping, his main army suddenly broke up their encampments, and passed beyond the army of Alfred into the interior of the country. Their object was to reach the Thames, where fordable, and to pass into Essex, where they could unite. The celerity of their movements prevented his vigilance, and an ample booty was their first reward. But the wakeful monarch was not long outstripped; he pursued with a speed commensurate to theirs. He reached them at Farnham, in Surrey, and hastening into action, with as much judgment as he had before deferred it, he defeated them so decisively, and pursued them with such vigour, that they were compelled to plunge into the Thames, for shelter against his sword. They who could swim, escaped into Middlesex. Alfred followed them through this county into Essex, and drove them across Essex over the Coln. In this point they found a refuge in the Isle of Mersey. The defences of this place secured them from attack,³⁴ and the king immediately besieged them. The army with him maintained the blockade as long as their time of

³³ Sax. Chren. 92.

³⁴ Bishop Gibson says of Mersey Island, which contains eight parishes, "It is a place of great strength, and may be almost kept against all the world, for which reason the

Parliament clapped in a thousand men to guard it from being seized by the Dutch, about the beginning of the Dutch war." Camd. 359.

service, and apportioned provisions, allowed them.³⁵ Alfred then marched thither with other forces from the county, whose allotment it was to continue the siege. The king of the Northmen being much wounded, they were compelled to stay in their position.

CHAP.

V.

894.

While Alfred was thus victoriously employed, the exhortations of Hastings produced at last their effect on the Danish colonists of Northumbria and East Anglia. Unable to resist the wish of seeing a countryman on the throne of Wessex, they combined their exertions to make two powerful diversions in favour of the invaders. With a hundred ships they passed the North Foreland, and sailed along the southern coasts, while a fleet of forty vessels successfully attempted a passage round the north of the island. Their scheme was to attack in two points. The larger armament besieged Exeter; the other, reaching the Bristol Channel, surrounded a fortress in the north part of the county.³⁶

The king was preparing to renew the blockade of Mersey, when the intelligence reached him of these invasions in the west. The possession of Devonshire was perilous to his best interests. The Welsh might be stimulated to take advantage of his difficulties; and if this county had been occupied by Danes, from its maritime conveniences, it might be difficult to dislodge them. Alfred therefore determined, at every hazard, to have Exeter relieved. He left his eastern troops to proceed to the siege of Mersey; and he hastened, with all his cavalry, to protect his endangered fortresses in Devonshire.

In the meantime Hastings had been more fortunate in his movement than his discomfited friends. He got out of the Swale, and crossing the Thames, he established himself at South Benfleet, near the Canvey Isle, in Essex; but he had

³⁵ The passage is curious: "Tha besæt sio fyrð hie thær utan tha hwile the hie lengest mete hæfdon. Ac hie hæfdon tha hiora stemn gesetenne and hiora mete genotudne." Sax. Chron. 93.

³⁶ Sax. Chron. 93. Flor. Wig. 330.

not been able to abandon Kent with total impunity. The same superintending genius which had chased the invaders from Farnham to Mersey, had watched the paths of Hastings, and had taken his wife and children. Alfred had baptized the boys; and, hoping to overcome the enmity of his competitor by liberality, he restored the captives with great presents.³⁷ But the delicate emotions of cultivated sentiment could not operate on the furious ambition of a sea-king, who subsisted by his army and his ravages. If he could not conquer a territorial settlement, he must pirate, or perish. His friendship therefore did not survive his fear; on the contrary, as soon as he had disembarked on Essex, instead of quitting the island, he prepared for new aggressions. His friends at Mersey, hearing of his arrival, joined him on the coast.

Alarmed into caution, by the skill of Alfred, he built a strong fortification at Benfleet, and from this sent out powerful detachments to forage. The acquisition of provisions was as necessary as, from the precautionary measures of Alfred, it was difficult. The country was no longer open to incursions as formerly; a regular communication of defence, and a vigilant armed peasantry, directed by able men, secured the property of the country, and straitened the supplies of the invader. Hastings had to conquer, before he could subsist.

From his strong hold at Benfleet, Hastings marched with a portion of his united army to plunder on the frontiers of Mercia. This excursion was fortunate for Alfred. The troops which he had allotted to act against the enemy in Mersey, proceeded through London, and were joined by the warlike citizens. While Hastings was abroad, the Anglo-Saxons attacked those who remained in the entrenchment, forced their defence, threw them into complete confusion, and carried away their wealth, women, and children, to London. Of the ships which lay under the protection of the fort, they

³⁷ Sax. Chron. 94. Alfred and his son in law, Ethered, stood sponsors. Flor. 331.

broke up some, burnt others, and sailed with the rest to London and Rochester.³³

The wife and children of Hastings were again sent to Alfred. The king consulted only his generosity, and with that noble magnanimity so rare not only in barbarous ages, but in civilized war, and yet which sheds new glory round the illustrious character who displays it, he loaded them with presents, and again sent them free to his rival.³⁹

During these transactions, Alfred had reached Exeter with so much expedition, that the invaders, disconcerted by his unexpected presence, raised the siege of the town with precipitation, hastened to their ships, and committed themselves once more to the chance of the ocean. On their return round the southern shore, they attacked Chichester, on the coast of Sussex; but the brave citizens repulsed them to the sea, slaying many hundreds, and taking some ships.⁴⁰

Before Alfred could return from Devonshire, Hastings had collected again his defeated army, and, keeping still on the sea-coast, where he might receive the supplies he needed, he erected a strong fortress at South Shobery, near the southeastern point of Essex; there he was joined by numbers from Northumbria and East Anglia. It is probable also that his established fame attracted to his aid whatever rovers were then about the British Channel. Confident from his numbers, and dissatisfied with his frustrated plan of defensive settlement, he adopted a new scheme of operations, in which, rapid enterprize was the predominant feature.

Hastings sailed daringly up the Thames into the heart of the king's dominions. By this intrepid measure, he had often scattered terror through France, and enriched himself with booty.

From the Thames he then marauded to the Severn. But his presence roused to their duty the military commanders of

³⁸ Sax. Chron. 94.

³⁹ Sax. Chron. 94. Flor. 331. It would seem that Hastings promised to quit England, but did not.

⁴⁰ Sax. Chron. 94, 96. Flor. 331.

every district which he traversed. Ethered, the governor of Mercia, two other aldermen, and the king's thanes, who were residing in the strong holds which he had erected, summoned the people of every borough from the east of Pedridan, the west of Selwood, and the east and north of the Thames, to the west of the Severn, with some portion of the North Welsh. The willing citizens united to protect their families and their property, pursued the bold invaders to Buttington, on the Severn, and besieged them in their fortress.

Surrounded by the hostility of the country, and without shipping, they were obliged to submit to the blockade. They were lodged on both banks of the Severn, and they remained confined to their post for several weeks, enduring every extremity of distress. A great part of their horses were destroyed for their subsistence, and many perished by famine."

The success with which the generals of Alfred, and their hasty levies, compelled such a spirit as that of Hastings to submit to a calamitous confinement, announces highly the energy and wisdom of the regulations by which Alfred had provided for the defence of his people.

Roused by their sufferings to furious action, the Northmen made at last a desperate attempt to burst from their prison. They threw themselves upon the Anglo-Saxons, who occupied the eastern part of the blockade, and after an ardent conflict, in which several royal thanes perished, they achieved their escape. They who survived the consumption of the battle, went directly forwards to Essex, and reached their entrenchments, and the ships they had abandoned, without further molestation.⁴¹

Although their bold enterprise had ended in disaster, yet their spirit of adventure was not quelled. They were educated to exist with the most excited and most pleasurable vitality in the tempests of war, and no failure deterred them, because,

⁴¹ Sax. Chron. 95.

⁴² Sax. Chron. 95. Florence says, many thousands of the Northmen fell in the battle, 332.

having no homes but their ships, or a conquered country, no trade but piracy, no provisions but their spoils, they had no chances of enjoyment, or even of existence, but from the battle. It was dreadful to have such an enemy to encounter, who must gain his point or perish, because there is a vivaciousness in his despair, which no danger can intimidate, no defeat, less than total annihilation, can destroy. He must act offensively while he lives. Desperate, and therefore fearless, he delights to multiply contests, because every encounter presenting a possibility of success, is to him an advantage, and to his opponent a peril.

The ruined bands of Hastings, were in this situation when they regained their station in Essex. He might have manned his vessels, and sought the smiles of fortune on more prosperous shores; but wherever he went he must extort subsistence from plunder, and carve his pillow with his sword. England had charms which overbalanced the discouragement of his discomfiture; and he resolved to wrestle with Alfred for the sceptre again.

Before the winter came on Hastings had raised a large army from the East Anglians and Northumbrians. Their wives, their shipping, and their wealth, they confided to the East Anglians, and marching with that vigorous rapidity from which Hastings had so often derived his surest advantages, they rested neither night nor day till they had reached and fortified Chester, in the Wiral.⁴³ Alfred was active to pursue, but he did not overtake them till they had embosomed themselves in military defences, which the military knowledge of that day respected as impregnable. Alfred, for two days, besieged

⁴³ Spelman, who, in his Life of Alfred, is generally accurate, construed Lega-ceaster to mean Leicester, but this town is spelt with an r before ceaster, as Legerceaster, Legraceaster. Sax. Chron. 25, and 106. The Wirall is thus described by Camden: "From the city (Chester) there runneth out a Chersonese into the sea, inclosed on one side with

the æstuary Dee, and on the other with the river Mersey; we call it Wirall; the Welsh, because it is a corner, Killgury. This was all heretofore a desolate forest, and not inhabited (as the natives say); but king Edward disforested it. Now it is well furnished with towns." Brit. Chesh.

BOOK
IV.

them, drove away all the cattle in the vicinity, slew every enemy who ventured beyond the encampment, and burnt and consumed all the corn of the district.⁴⁴

895. From Chester, Hastings led his bands for subsistence into North Wales: he plundered, and then quitted it, with his booty; but not daring to molest West Saxony or Mercia, where the troops of Alfred were watching his progress, he made a circuit through Northumbria and East Anglia, and proceeded till he reached Mersey, in Essex. Hastings, before the winter, drew his ships from the Thames up the Lea.⁴⁵

896. To protect his fleet, Hastings built a fortress on the Lea, twenty miles above London. This distance suits either Ware or Hartford.⁴⁶ To have maintained this position would have been to have secured to himself an establishment in Essex. In the summer, a great number of the citizens of London, and many from its neighbourhood, attacked the Danish strong hold, but the Northmen repulsed them with the loss of four king's thanes. This disaster required the presence and ability of Alfred to repair. In autumn he encamped near the discomfited city, at the time when the harvest ripened, that the invaders might not deprive the Londoners of their subsistence. One day, the king musing on some decisive blow against his pertinacious enemy, rode to the river, and revolved a plan of so affecting the stream, that the ships might be prevented from coming out. By digging three new channels below, he drew off so much water as to leave the ships aground;⁴⁷ and to protect his new works, he built a castle on each side of the river, and encamped in the vicinity.

⁴⁴ Sax. Chron. 95.

⁴⁵ Flor. Wig. 333. The Lea (Ligan) is the little river which divides Essex from Middlesex, as the Stour separates it from Suffolk, and the Stort from Hertfordshire.

⁴⁶ Camden mentions Ware; Spelman, Hartford.

⁴⁷ I insert this account on the authority of Huntingdon, because his statement is adopted by Camden and Spelman. The Saxon Chronicle and Florence imply, that Alfred made the Danish ships useless by obstructions, by building two works (ge-weorc S. C. obstructuram F.) below the part where the vessels lay.

Finding that they could not get out their ships, the Northmen abandoned them, and, desirous to escape from the nets of destruction with which the active mind of Alfred was encompassing them, they had again recourse to that celerity of movement which had so often rescued them from impending ruin. Sending their wives to their countrymen in East Anglia,⁴⁸ they suddenly broke up from their entrenchments, and, out-flying Alfred, they traversed all England, from the Lea to the Severn, and settling themselves at Bridgnorth,⁴⁹ they defended their encampments, as usual, by an immediate fortification.

The idea of always protecting their positions by military defences, and the facility with which they raised such as Alfred dared not assault, augur favourably of the warlike knowledge of the invaders.

The cavalry of Alfred followed Hastings to the Severn, but respected his entrenchments so highly as to permit him to pass the winter unmolested. In the meantime, the citizens of London seized the ships on the Lea; such as they could bring away were carried to London, with their contents; the others were destroyed.

For three years had Hastings, undismayed, contended against Alfred; and, notwithstanding the power, skill, and victories of the West Saxon king, had always recruited his losses, and maintained his invasion; but his spirit now began to bend under the genius of his master. All that energy and valour, and labour, could effect, he had used in vain. Hastings therefore at last yielded indignantly to his evil fortune. He disbanded his despairing followers; some withdrew to East Anglia, some to Northumbria. They who had no resources

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⁴⁸ Flor. Wig. 334. Sax. Chron. 97.
⁴⁹ The Saxon says, "Cwatbrige bæ Se-fern," 97. The ancient name of Bridgnorth in the Saxon annals is Bricge, and in ancient records it is called Bridge. Two towns near it are called Quatford, and Quat, which is a

fact, implying that Cwat bridge should not be far off. Gibson's add. to Camden, 552. Spelman placed it in this part, p. 88. Camden and Somner sought for it at Cambridge, and in Gloucestershire, which is less probable.

to expect from these regions, made ships; and, stimulated by want, crossed the ocean, and attempted plunder on the Seine.⁵¹

One feeble attempt closed the tragedy of invasion, which must have been prodigal of human life. The depredators, who had retired beyond the Humber and the Ouse, embarked in long, well-constructed ships, to revenge themselves by piracy on the coast of Wessex. But even through the ocean the genius of Alfred pursued them. He was skilled in domestic architecture; and he applied his talents to the construction of ships: he caused vessels to be built against the Northmen, full-nigh twice as long as theirs, swifter, higher, and less unsteady. In some he put sixty rowers, in others more. They were neither like Frisian nor Danish ships, which then excelled all others in Europe. They were made on that improved plan which the judgment of Alfred, enlightened by his knowledge and experience, discerned to be more useful than either.⁵² Six Danish vessels ravaged the Isle of Wight and Devonshire, and the intervening coast. The king ordered nine ships of his new naval architecture, manned with Frisians and English, to pursue them; with the orders to take alive all they could.⁵³ The king's fleet found the Northmen's six near the shore; three of these were aground, the other three went out and endured the combat, two were taken, the third escaped with only five men. The conquering English sailed to the bay, where the others were detained; but the inconstant waters betrayed them into peril. The unexpected retreat of the waves separated the English fleet into two portions; one, consisting of three ships, remained fixed close by the enemy, the rest were kept asunder on another part, and could not

⁵¹ Sax. Chron. 97. Flor. Wig. 334.

⁵² This important passage deserves to be transcribed in its original language: "Tha het Alfred cyning timbrian lange scipu ongen tha æscas. Tha wæron ful neah twa swa lange swa tha othru. Sume hæfdon 60 ara, sume ma. Tha wæron ægther ge swiftran,

ge unwealtran, ge eac hyran thonne tha othru. Næron hie nawther ne on Fresisc gescæpene ne on Dænisc bute swa him selfum thuhte, thaet hie nytwyrthoste beon meahton." Sax. Ch. 98.

⁵³ Fl. Wig. 335.

move to the support of their friends. The wary Danes embraced the opportunity, and attacked the three ships which the waters had placed near them. Lucumon, the king's gerefæ, perished, and Æthelferth, his geneat or herdsman, three Frisian chiefs, and sixty-two of the crew. Of the Danes, 120 fell. The battle seems to have been indecisive; but the tide first releasing the Danish ships, they sailed into the ocean. They were, however, so injured, that two were afterwards cast on the English shore, and their crews were ordered by Alfred to execution. The same year, twenty more of their ships were taken, and the men were punished as pirates.⁵⁴

Thus terminated the formidable attempt of Hastings. As far as we can distinguish the last incidents of his life, he returned to France, and obtained from the king the gift of some territory, where he passed the remainder of his life in peaceful privacy.⁵⁵ His memory was honoured by the encomium of a warrior, in a future age, whose invasion of England was successful, but who had not to encounter the abilities of an Alfred.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the vigilance and ability of Alfred, it was impossible that such a dangerous contest could have existed without some immediate detriment to his people.⁵⁷ But the miseries of this warfare were exceeded by the dreadful calamity which attended its conclusion. A pestilence which raged for three years filled the nation with death; even the highest ranks were thinned by its destruction.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Sax. Ch. 99. Flo. Wig. 335.

⁵⁵ Hastings vero Karolum Francorum regem adiens, pacem petiit, quam adipiscens, urbem Carnotensem stipendii munere ab ipso accepit. Wil. Gemm. 221. He is mentioned for the last time on Rollo's invasion and acquisition of Normandy, as residing at this place. Ib. p. 228; and Dudo, p. 76.

⁵⁶ William the Conqueror, in his address to his troops, as stated by Bromton, says, "Quid potuit rex Francorum bellis proficere cum omni gente quæ est a Lotoringia usque ad Hispaniam contra Hasting antecessorem

vestrum, qui sibi quantum de Francia voluit acquisivit, quantum voluit regi permisit, dum placuit tenuit, dum sauciatus est ad majora anelans reliquit," p. 959.

⁵⁷ The exclamation of the monk of Worcester is forcible: "O quam crebris vexationibus, quam gravibus laboribus, quam diris et lamentalibus modis, non solum a Danis, qui partes Angliæ tunc temporis occupaverant, verum etiam ab his Satanæ filiis tota vexata est Anglia," p. 334.

⁵⁸ Some of the noblemen who perished, are named in Sax. Ch. p. 97. and Flo. Wig. 335.

The sovereignty of Alfred was not only established over the Anglo-Saxons,⁵⁹ but even the Cymry in Wales acknowledged his power, and sought alliance with his virtues.

The friendship of Alfred was never sought in vain. All experienced that love, vigilance, and protection, with which the king defended himself, and those attached to him.⁶⁰ But at last the progress of human destiny deprived the world of this most beneficent luminary. This victorious warrior; this sagacious statesman; this friend of distress; this protector against oppression; who, in an age of ignorance, loved literature, and diffused it; who, in an age of superstition, could be rationally pious; and in the station of royalty could discern his faults, and convert them into virtues; was at last called away from the world, on the 26th day of October, in the year 900, or 901.⁶¹ But his great character demands a more minute inspection; and we hasten to describe more accurately that mind and heart which we cannot contemplate without that love and veneration which the union of great genius and great virtues claims as their best earthly reward, and irresistibly excites in the well governed mind.⁶²

⁵⁹ In 836 Alfred besieged London (Ethelw. 846) rebuilt it with honour, made it habitable, and subjected it to Ethelred's dominion. It is added, that all the Anglo-Saxons, not under the dominion of the Danes, submitted to Alfred. Flo. Wig. 322. Sax. Ch. 88.

⁶⁰ Asser, 50.

⁶¹ The year of his death is variously given. Mat. West. 350. Ing. 28. and Rad. Dic. 452. place it in 900. The Sax. Chron. 99. Malms. 46. Mailros, 146. Florence, 336. Petrib, 901. affix to it the year 901. So Hen. Silgrave, MSS. Cleop. A. 12, and others.

⁶² Alfred has been highly extolled by foreigners. The following extracts shew the opinions of a Frenchman and German on his

character:—*Je ne sçais s'il y a jamais eu sur la terre un homme plus digne des respects de la posterité qu'Alfred le grand qui rendit ces services à sa patrie, supposé que tout ce qu'on raconte de lui soit véritable.* Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, c. 26. vol. 16. p. 473. ed. 1785. — “But as the greatest minds display themselves in the most turbulent storms on the call of necessity, so England has to boast, among others, her Alfred; a pattern for kings in a time of extremity, a bright star in the history of mankind. Living a century after Charlemagne, he was perhaps a greater man in a circle happily more limited.” Herder's *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, p. 547, 548.

THE
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BOOK V.

CHAP. I.

Alfred's intellectual Character.

THE character of Alfred may be considered in three points of view—in his intellectual, his moral, and his political conduct.^{*} CHAP.
I.

In one circumstance Alfred will be paralleled by many, and to such his example is inestimable. He was passing the early periods of his youth without knowledge or instruction. The embarrassments or the absurdity of his father, concurred with the ignorance of the age, to deprive the young prince of any education. At first, he was unfortunately the object of his father's dotage, and might have been ruined by his excessive affection, if a new marriage, and the usurpation of Ethelbald,

His first studies.

^{*} Alfred had the felicity of possessing a literary friend, Asser, of Saint David's, who composed some biographical sketches of his great master's life and manners. His work is somewhat rude and incomplete; but it is estimable for its apparent candour and unaffected simplicity. It is the effusion of a sensible, honest, observing mind. The information which it conveys has never been contradicted, and harmonizes with every other history or tradition, that has been preserved concerning Alfred. The merits of Alfred, therefore, are supported by a degree of evidence which seldom attends the characters of ancient days.

had not superseded his attractions. But he was twelve years of age before he was even taught to read.²

That he was advancing into active youth without instruction, was the fault of others. But that his mind, though boyish, craved information, and was eagerly seeking the opportunities of acquiring it, was a merit of his own. The only department of literature to which he could gain access by his own industry was, the region of the Muses. There is a charm in Pierian harmony, even of the most common species, which has in all times and places arrested the most uncultivated ear. Hence, even in the ninth century, there were men fond of repeating Saxon poems; and wherever these were recited, Alfred was an eager auditor, and was industrious to commit them to his memory.³ This fondness for poetry continued with him through life. It was always one of his principal pleasures to learn Saxon poems, and to teach them to others.⁴ The memory of his children was also chiefly exercised in this captivating art.⁵ It had a powerful effect on Alfred's mind; it created a wish for further knowledge; and when his mother promised the book, already mentioned, to her son who could read it, Alfred sought an instructor, and never ceased his exertions till he had enabled himself to read.⁶

But although the art of reading is now an indispensable requisite to every order of society, it was then neglected and

² Asser, 16. Malmsb. 45. Jam duodenis omnis literaturæ expers fuit.

³ Sed Saxonica poemata die noctuque solers auditor relatu aliorum sæpissime audiens, docibilis memoriter retinebat. Asser, 16.

⁴ Et maxime carmina Saxonica memoriter discere, aliis imperare. Asser, 43. Many princes were at this period fond of poetry. Eginhard mentions of Charlemagne, that he transcribed and learnt the barbara et antiquissima carmina quibus veterum regum actus et bella canebantur, p. 11. In 844 died Abdalla, son of Taher, a Persian king, in Chorasán, who composed some Arabic poems, and was celebrated for his talents in many elegies, by the poets who survived

him. Mirchond Hist. Reg. Pers. p. 9. In 862, Mustansir Billa, the Caliph of the Saracens, died by poison; he wrote verses, of which Elmacin has preserved two. Hist. Sarac. c. 12. p. 154. Wacîc, the Caliph, who died 845, was a poet. Elmacin cites some of his verses. His dying words were, "O thou, whose kingdom never passes away, pity one whose dignity is so transient," ib. His successor, Mutewakel, was also poetical.

⁵ Et maxime Saxonica carmina studiose dedicere et frequentissime libris utuntur. Asser, 43.

⁶ Asser, 16. Malmsb. 45.

despised even in royal and clerical education. The brothers of Alfred, who preceded him on the throne, disdained it. That class of the nation, in whom all the learning of barbarous times concentrates, was in general ignorant of it.⁷ Accustomed as we are to see it possessed by almost every one, we can hardly conceive the wonderful effects which this attainment has wrought upon modern society. The knowledge of the alphabet is indeed the possession of a fairy wand of most stupendous power. Did a magician offer us by his art to transport us to the busy streets of Athens or of Rome, while Demosthenes harangued, or Socrates taught, or Virgil sang, to make past ages live again, and to revive every character which adorned them; could he pass all the regions of the globe at our pleasure before us, and pour upon our minds all the reasonings of intellect, all the discoveries of philosophy, and all the experience of time; how should we acclaim the magnificent proposal! To learn to read, is to acquire this powerful faculty. Had Alfred never known the alphabet, he would have known nothing but the thoughts and actions of barbarian Saxons, and idolatrous Danes; but possessed of that magical telescope which brought to his view the anterior ages of humanity, and all their immortalized personages, he strove for virtues which he could not else have conceived: he became a model of wisdom and excellence himself, for other generations to resemble.

In considering the mental proficiency of Alfred, we shall do him injustice if we do not keep continually in our recollection, that he was himself the architect of his knowledge. Modern education deprives modern men of this merit, because all parents are at present anxious to have their children taught whatever it is honourable to know. To be intelligent now is even more necessary than to be affluent, because Mind has become the invisible sovereign of the world. Her favourites, diffused every where in society, are the tutors of the human

⁷ Alfred himself attests this in his preface to his Version of Gregory's Pastorals.

race; they dictate the opinions, they fashion the conduct of all men. To be illiterate, or to be imbecil, in this illumined day, is to be despised and trodden down in that tumultuous struggle for wealth, power, or reputation, in which every individual is too eagerly conflicting. In the days of Alfred, the intellect was a faculty which few thought of cultivating, or even knew that they possessed.

Even churchmen partook of the most gross ignorance of the times: "Very few were they," says Alfred, "on this side the Humber (the most improved parts of England) who could understand their daily prayers in English, or translate any letter from the Latin. I think there were not many beyond the Humber; they were so few, that I indeed cannot recollect one single instance on the south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom."⁸ The earls, governors, and servants of Alfred, were as uninformed. When the king's wise severity afterwards compelled them to the study of literature, or to be degraded, they lamented that in their youth they had not been instructed; they thought their children happy who could be taught the liberal arts, and mourned their own misfortune, who had not learnt in their youth; because in advanced life they felt themselves too old to acquire what Alfred's commands imposed as a duty, and by his example, had made a wish.⁹

When Alfred began his own education, he had not only to find the stimulus in himself, and to cherish it in opposition to the prejudices and practice of his countrymen, but he had also to struggle against difficulties which would have extinguished the infant desire in a mind of less energy. His

⁸ Swithe feawe wæron behionan Humbre the hiora thenunga cuthen understandan on Englisc oththe furthum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccan and ic wene thæt te nauht monige begeondan Humbre næren: swa feawe hiora wæron thætte ic furthum anne anlepne ne mæg gethencean be suthan Temese tha tha ic to rice feng. Alfred's Preface, p. 82. Wise's Asser.

⁹ Et suspirantes nimium intima mente dolebant, eo quod in juventute sua talibus studiis non studuerant; felices arbitantes hujus temporis juvenes qui liberalibus artibus feliciter erudiri potuerant; se vero infelices existimantes qui nec hoc in juventute didicerant, nec etiam in senectute quamvis in hianter desiderarent, poterant discere. Asser, 71.

principal obstacle was the want of instructors. "What," says his friend, who happily for posterity has made us acquainted with the private feelings as well as public pursuits of this noble-minded sovereign, "what of all his troubles and difficulties, he affirmed with frequent complaint and the deep lamentations of his heart, to have been the greatest, was, that when he had the age, permission, and ability to learn, he could find no masters."¹⁰ When Alfred had attained the age of maturity, and, by the dignity to which he succeeded, had gained the means of obtaining instruction, he was almost disabled from profiting by the advantage. A disease, his daily and nightly tormentor, which his physicians could neither remedy nor explore; the duties and anxieties inseparable from his royal station; the fierce aggressions of the Northmen, which on sea and land demanded his presence and exertions, so afflicted and consumed his future life, that though he got a few masters and writers, he was unable to enjoy their tuition." It is admirable to see, that notwithstanding impediments, which to most would have been insuperable, Alfred persevered in his pursuit of improvement. The desire of knowledge, that inborn instinct of the truly great, which no gratifications could saturate, no obstacles discourage, never left him but with life.¹¹ If Alfred succeeded in his mental cultivation, who should despair?

It has been already hinted, that the Anglo-Saxon language had been at this period very little applied to the purposes of literature. In their vernacular tongue, Cedmon and Aldhelm had sung, but almost all the learning of the nation was clothed in the Latin phrase. Bede had in this composed his history,

¹⁰ Asser, 17.

¹¹ Quando vero et ætate erat provectior et incessabilius die noctuque, immo, omnibus istius insulæ medicis incognitis infirmitatibus, internisque atque externis regiæ potestatis sollicitudinibus, necnon et paganorum terra marique infestationibus occupatus, immo etiam perturbatos magistros et scrip-

tores aliquantula ex parte habebat, legere ut non poterat. Asser, 17.

¹² Sed tamen inter præsentis vitæ impedimenta ab infantia usque ad præsentem diem, et ut credo usque ad obitum vitæ suæ in eodem insaturabili desiderio sicut nec ante destituit, ita nec etiam adhuc inhiare desinit. Asser, 17.

and his multifarious treatises on chronology, grammar, rhetoric, and other subjects of erudition. Alcuin, and the other lettered monks of that day, also expressed themselves in the language, though not with the eloquence of Cicero. The immortalized classics had not been as yet familiarized to our ancestors by translations; he therefore, who knew not Latin, could not know much.

From the period of his father's death in 858, to his accession in 871, Alfred had no opportunity of procuring that knowledge which he coveted. Such feelings as his could not be cherished by elder brothers, who were unacquainted with them, or by a nation who despised them. When he verged towards manhood he was still unable to obtain instructors, because his influence was small and his patrimony was withheld.¹³ The hostilities of the Northmen augmented every obstacle: on every occasion they burnt the books which the Anglo-Saxons had collected, and destroyed the men who could use them, in their promiscuous persecution of the Christian clergy. Their presence also compelled Alfred into the martial field, and from these united causes his ardent thirst for knowledge remained ungratified, until the possession of the crown invested him with the wealth and influence of the West-Saxon kings.

But on receiving the crown, he exerted himself to remove the ignorance of divine and human learning, which he had been so long lamenting in himself.¹⁴ He sent at various intervals to every part, abroad and at home, for instructors capable of translating the learned languages. Like the sagacious bee, says his honoured friend, which, springing in the dawn of summer from its beloved cells, wheels its swift flight

¹³ Alfred details the particulars in his will: he says, that Ethelwulf left his inheritance to Ethelbald, Ethelred, and Alfred, and to the survivor of them; and that on Ethelbald's death, Ethelred and Alfred gave it to Ethelbert their brother, on condition of receiving it again at his decease; when Ethelred acceded, Alfred requested of him, before all the nobles, to divide the inherit-

ance, that Alfred might have his share, but Ethelred refused.

¹⁴ Asser declares, that with daily and nightly sorrow he complained, et assiduo gemebat suspirio, eo quod Deus omnipotens eum expertem divinæ sapientiæ et liberalium artium fecisset, p. 45.

through the trackless air, descends on the shrubs and flowers of vegetable nature, selects what it prefers, and brings home the grateful load; so Alfred, directing afar his intellectual eye, sought elsewhere for the treasure which his own kingdom did not afford.¹⁵

His first acquisitions were, Werfrith, the bishop of Worcester, a man skilled in the scriptures; Plegmund, a Mercian, who was made archbishop of Canterbury, a wise and venerable man; Ethelstan and Werwulf, also Mercians and priests. He invited them to his court, and endowed them munificently with promotions; and by their incessant exertions, the studious passion of Alfred was appeased. By day and by night, whenever he could create leisure to listen, they recited or interpreted to him the books he commanded; he was never without one of them near him: and by this indefatigable application, though he could not himself understand the learned languages as yet, he obtained a general knowledge of all that books contained.¹⁶

The information which the king acquired, rather disclosed him the vast repositories of knowledge, of which he was ignorant, than satisfied him with its attainment. The more he knew, the more tuition he craved. He sent ambassadors over the sea into France, to inquire for teachers there. He obtained from that country, Grimbald, the priest and monk, who had treated him kindly in his journies, and who is described as a respected man, learned in the writings he revered, adorned with every moral excellence, and skilled in vocal music. He obtained another literary friend, of talents and acquisitions much superior, and indeed worthy of Alfred's society. This was Johannes Erigena, or John the Irishman, a monk of most penetrating intellect, acquainted with all the treasures of literature, versed in many languages, and accomplished in many other arts. By these acquisitions the mind of Alfred

¹⁵ Asser, p. 45.

¹⁶ Asser, 46.

was greatly expanded and enriched, and he rewarded their friendship with princely liberality.¹⁷

The merit of Asser also reached the king's ear, which was open to every rumour of extraordinary merit.

"I was called by the king," says this plain, but interesting biographer, "from the western extremities of Wales. I accompanied my conductors to Sussex, and first saw him in the royal city of Dene. I was benignantly received by him. Amongst other conversation, he asked me earnestly to devote myself to his service, and to become his companion. He requested me to leave all my preferments beyond the Severn, and he promised to compensate them to me by greater possessions."¹⁸ Asser expressed an hesitation at quitting without necessity, and merely for profit, the places where he had been nourished, and taken orders. Alfred replied, "If this will not suit you, accommodate me with at least half of your time. Be with me six months, and pass the rest in Wales." Asser declined to engage himself till he had consulted his friends. The king condescended to repeat his solicitations, and Asser promised to return to him within half a year; a day was fixed as a pledge for his visit; and, on the fourth day of their interview, Asser quitted him to go home.¹⁹

A fever seized the Welshman at Winton, and continued to oppress him for a year.²⁰ The king, not seeing him at the appointed day, sent letters to inquire into the cause of his tarrying, and to accelerate his journey. Asser, unable to stir, wrote to acquaint him with the disease; but, on his recovery, he advised with his friends, and, on receiving their assent, he attached himself to Alfred for a moiety of every year. The clergy of St. David's expected that Alfred's friendship for Asser would preserve their patrimony from the depredations of Hemeid.²¹ "I was honourably received in the royal city

¹⁷ Asser, 46, 47.

¹⁸ Asser, 47.

¹⁹ Asser, 47, 48.

²⁰ Asser, 48.

²¹ Asser, 49. Hemeid was one of the Welsh princes contiguous to St. David's.

of Leonaford," says Asser, "and that time staid eight months in his court. I translated and read to him whatever books he wished, which were within our reach; for it was his peculiar and perpetual custom, day and night, amidst all his other afflictions of mind and body, either to read books himself, or to have them read to him by others." Asser states the profuse donations with which Alfred remunerated his attachment.²² No eloquence can do more honour to any human character, than this unadorned narration. The condescension, benignity, the desire of improvement, and the wise liberality of Alfred, are qualities so estimable, as to ensure the veneration of every reader.

The manner of his obtaining the society of Grimbald, was an evidence of the respect and delicacy with which he treated those whom he selected for his literary companions. He sent an honourable embassy of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and religious laymen, to Fulco, the archbishop of Rheims, within whose district Grimbald resided.²³ He accompanied his mission with munificent presents,²⁴ and his petition was, that Grimbald

²² Asser, 50. On the morning of Christmas eve, when Asser was determining to visit Wales, the king gave him two writings, containing a list of the things which were in the two monasteries at Ambresbury, in Wiltshire, and Banwell, in Somerset. In the same day, Alfred gave him those two monasteries, and all that they contained, a silk pall, very precious, and as much incense as a strong man could carry; adding, that he did not give him these *trifles* as if he was unwilling to give him greater things. On Asser's next visit, the king gave him Exeter, with all the parish belonging to it in Saxony and Cornwall, besides innumerable daily gifts of all sorts of worldly wealth. He gave him immediate permission of riding to the two monasteries, and then of returning home, p. 50, 51.

²³ Fulco's letter to Alfred on this subject is yet extant. It is printed at the end of Wise's Asser, p. 123—129. He says, p. 128, "Eum ad vos mittendum cum suis electoribus et cum nonnullis regni vestri proceribus

vel optimatibus tam episcopis scilicet, presbyteris Diaconibus, quam etiam religiosis Laicis, &c." In p. 126, he starts a curious metaphor. He says, "Misistes siquidem nobis licet generosos et optimos tamen corporales atque mortales *canes*." This rhetorical metamorphosis is pursued for thirteen lines. These noble dogs were to drive away the irreligious wolves; and, he says, they came to desire some other dogs, not the dumb dogs mentioned by the prophet, but good noisy dogs who could bark heartily, "Pro domino suo magnos latratus fundere." One of these was Grimbald. Fulco may have strayed into a joke, but he intended a serious compliment.

²⁴ Fulco says "Et quum talia a nobis quesituri ac petitori, noluitis quasi immunes et manu vacua apparere, dignata est vestra regia dominatio nos maximo munere, et necessario multum tempore, et congruo satis rei de qua agitur honorare: super qua re—et vestrae regiae munificentiae grates non modicos retulimus," p. 126.

might be permitted to leave his functions in France, and to reside in England. The ambassadors engaged for Alfred, that Grimbald should be treated with distinguished honour during the rest of his life.²⁵ The archbishop, in his letter to Alfred, speaks highly of the king's administration of his government,²⁶ and commends the merit of Grimbald.²⁷ Fulco adds, that it was with great personal pain, that he permitted him to be taken from France.²⁸ The liberality of Alfred overcame his reluctance, and Grimbald became a companion of the king of Wessex.

In 887, Alfred obtained the happiness he had long coveted, of reading the Latin authors in their original language. Asser has noted the date of the circumstance, and described its occurrence. As the monarch and his friend were sitting together, and, as usual, discoursing in the royal apartments, it happened that Asser made a quotation. The king was struck with it, and taking from his bosom his little book of devotion, he required that it might be inserted therein. Asser found no room in the little manual of his piety, and after some hesitation, calculated to increase his desire, proposed to put a few other leaves together, for the purpose of preserving any passages that might please the king. Alfred assented; the new book was made; the quotation was entered, and soon two more, as they occurred in the conversation. The king, pleased with the sentiments, began to translate them into Saxon. The book became full of diversified extracts. The first were from the scriptures, others from all subjects. Alfred was delighted with his new talent; and the book became a

²⁵ Fulco says of Alfred's ambassadors, "Qui nobis viva voce in præsentia totius ecclesiæ nostræ profiteantur atque promittant, eum condigno honore se habituros omni tempore vitæ suæ," p. 128.

²⁶ He says to Alfred, "Regni vobis cælitus commissi strenue administratis utilitatem, bellicis armis, (cum divino adiutorio)

illius exquirendo vel tuendo pacem, &c." p. 123.

²⁷ P. 127.

²⁸ Non sine ingenti, ut ita dixerimus, dolore patimur illum a nobis divelli, et per tanta spatia terrarum ac maris, a nostris obtutibus separari. Fulco, p. 127.

perpetual companion, in which he declared, he had no small recreation.²⁹

CHAP.
I.

To John Erigena, to Grimbold, to Asser, and Plegmund, Alfred ascribes his acquisition of the Latin language.³⁰

His desire to improve his people was so ardent, that he had scarcely made the attainment before he was active to make it of public utility. He beheld his subjects ignorant and barbarous, and he wisely judged that he should best amend their condition by informing their minds. Let us hear his own noble mind giving voice to his sublime feelings.

He first recalls to the mind of his correspondent, that even the Anglo-Saxons had once been more learned than he found them. "I wish thee to know that it comes very often into my mind what wise men there were in England, both laymen and ecclesiastics, and how happy those times were to England! how the kings, who then had the government of the people, obeyed God and his apostles! how they preserved their peace, their customs, and their power at home, and increased their nobles abroad, and how they prospered both in wisdom and in war! The sacred profession was diligent both to teach and to learn, and in all the offices which they should do to God. Men from abroad sought wisdom and learning hither in this country, though we now must go out of it to obtain knowledge, if we should wish to have it."

Alfred's
preface.

The king contrasts with this account the state of England in his time.

"So clean is it fallen out of England, that there are very few on this side of the Humber who understand to say their prayers in English, or to translate any letter from Latin into English; and I know that there were not many beyond the

? understood

²⁹ Asser, 56, 57. In quo non mediocre, sicut tunc aiebat, habebat solatium. In the history of the literature of the Anglo-Saxons an account will be found of the king's literary companions.

³⁰ "Swe swe ic hie geleornode æt Pleg-

munde, minum Ærcebiscepe; and æt Asserie, mine Biscepe; and æt Grimbolde, minum messe preoste; and æt Johanne, minum messe preoste." Alfred's preface to his Gregory's Pastorals, p. 85.

Humber; so few were they, that I indeed cannot think of a single instance south of the 'Thames, when I took the kingdom."

Recollecting here the success of his own exertions, he exclaims, "Thanks be to Almighty God, that we have now some teachers in our stalls!"

The father of his people, and the true philosopher, appear strikingly in the expressions which he continues to use: "Therefore I request that you do, as I believe that you will, that you who have leisure for the things of this world, as often as possible, impart that wisdom which God has given you, wherever you can communicate it. Think what punishments will come upon us for this world, if we shall have neither loved it ourselves, nor left it to others: though we are called Christians, we have had only the name, and very few the practice."

"When I recollect all this, I also remember how I saw, before that every thing was ravaged and burnt, that the churches through all the English nation stood full of vessels and books, and also of a great many of the servants of God."

This statement would tempt us to imagine that the Anglo-Saxons had been a learned people before the days of Alfred; but the discriminating king prevents the delusion, by his subsequent paragraphs. They had the means of knowledge, rather than its possession.

"They knew very little of the use of their books, because they could not understand any thing in them, as they were not written in the language which they spoke. Our ancestors, that held these places before, loved wisdom, and through this they obtained abundance, and left it to us. Here we may yet see their treasures, though we are unable to explore them; therefore we have now lost both their wealth and their wisdom, because we would not with our minds tread in their steps."

“ When I remembered all this, then I wondered greatly that of those good wise men who were formerly in our nation, and who had learnt all these books, none would translate any part into their own language ; but I soon answered myself, and said, they never thought that men would be so wreckless, and that learning would be so fallen. They intentionally omitted it, and wished that there should be more wisdom in the land, by many languages being known.

“ I then recollected how the law was first found in the Hebrew tongue, and that after the Greeks had learned it, they translated it all into their own language, and also other books ; and the Latin men likewise, when they had learned it, they, by wise foreigners, turned it into their tongue ; and also every other Christian nation translated some part.”

The wise, benevolent, but unassuming king, proceeds with amiable modesty to say to the bishop he addresses, “ Therefore I think it better, if you think so, that we also translate some books, the most necessary for all men to know, into our own language, that we all may be acquainted with them ; and we may do this, with God’s help, very easy, if we have stillness ; so that all the youth that now are in England, who are free men, and have wealth that they may fill themselves, be committed to learning, so that they may apply to no other duty till they first well know to read English writing. Let them learn further the Latin language, they who will further learn, and will advance to a higher state.”

“ When I recalled to mind how the learning of the Latin tongue before this was fallen through the English nation, and that many could read English, then began I, among much other manifold business of this kingdom, to turn into English the book named *Pastoralis*, or the Herdsman’s Book, sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense, so as I had learned of Plegmund, my archbishop ; and of Asser, my

bishop; of Grimbold, my mass priest; and of John, my mass priest."³¹

Such is the king's preface to his translation. What a sublime character appears to us in these artless effusions. A king, though himself a barbarian in nation, age, and education, yet not merely with unexampled expanse of mind, calmly planning to raise his people from their ignorance, but amid anxiety, business, and disease, sitting down himself to level the obstacles by his own personal labour, and to lead them, by his own practice, to the improvements he wished.

Of the books which the king translated, the principal were, Orosius, Bede, Boethius, and the Pastorals of Gregory. They will be noticed in the history of the Anglo-Saxon literature.

But it is now impossible to enumerate in detail all the literary translations of Alfred, because they have not been minutely specified by our chroniclers. We learn from the king himself, that he had resolved to translate some books.³² The life of St. Neot says, that he made many books.³³ Malmsbury affirms, that he put into English a great part of the Roman compositions;³⁴ and the more ancient Ethelwerd declares, that the number of his versions was not known.³⁵

It has been declared, that the parables of the king had great edification, beauty, pleasantry, and nobleness.³⁶ Whether this paragraph relates to the fables which Mary ascribes to him, cannot now be ascertained.

Alfred is also praised for his excellence in proverbial sayings.³⁷ Some collections of this sort have been noticed by his learned

³¹ This preface of Alfred is published in the Anglo-Saxon by Wise, after Asser de rebus gestis Alfredi, from the Cod. MSS. Jun. 53.

³² Thæt we eac sum bec, &c. Wise, p. 84.

³³ "Eac is to wytene tha se king Ælfred manega bæc thurh Godes gast gedyhte." Vita Sancti Neoti, p. 147. MSS. Cott. Vesp. D. 14.

³⁴ Malmsb. p. 45.

³⁵ Nam ex Latino rhetorico fasmate in

propriam verterat linguam volumina, numero ignoto, &c. Ethelwerd, 847.

³⁶ Parabolæ ejus plurimum habentes edificationis, venustatis, jocunditatis, et nobilitatis. Chron. Joan. Oxenades, in the Cotton Lib. MSS. Nero. D. 2. So Ail. Rivall. p. 355. Extant parabolæ ejus plurimum habentes ædificationis, sed et venustatis et jocunditatis.

³⁷ In proverbiiis ita enituit ut nemo post illum amplius. Annales Eccl. Winton. 1. Anglia Sacra, 289.

biographer, Spelman, which may perhaps contain some of his ideas as preserved by tradition, and as in a later age committed to writing; but they are probably not wholly in the phrases of his own composition.³⁸

CHAP.

I.

Of Alfred's manual or memorandum book, which seems to have existed in Malmsbury's days,³⁹ and which would have been such a curiosity to modern times, not even a remnant has been found.

The genius of Alfred was not confined to literature: it also extended to the arts; and in three of these, architecture, ship-building, and gold and silver workmanship, he obtained an excellence which corresponded with his other talents.

His taste in the arts.

Asser mentions, that he caused edifices to be constructed from his own new designs, more venerable and precious than those which his predecessors had raised.⁴⁰ These not only consisted of halls and royal apartments, made of wood or stone, in pursuance of his directions, to the surprize of his contemporaries, but he also formed cities and towns, some of which he repaired, and others built; some he destroyed on their ancient sites, to raise them of stone, in positions more

Architecture.

³⁸ One of these, the least likely to be Alfred's, may be seen in Dr. Hickes's Anglo-Saxon Grammar, p. 222. The other, which suits better Alfred's wisdom, has been quoted by Spelman, in his Life of Alfred, and translated from the MS. in the Cotton Library. See p. 94. of Walker's edition; and 127 of Hearne's. Spelman's extracts may be more valued, as the Cotton MS. Galba, A. 19. was ruined by the fire which destroyed much valuable antiquity.

³⁹ Malmsbury's references to this, shew, that it was not a mere receptacle for devout extracts, but was rather a general commonplace book; for he cites from it some traits of biography, and observations on a piece of poetry. "Qui enim legit manualement librum regis Elfredi, reperiet Kenterum Beati Aldhelmi patrum non fuisse regis Inæ germanum sed arcissima necessitudine consanguineum," Lib. 5. De Pont. 341. Again, speaking of Aldhelm, he says, he cultivated Anglo-Saxon

poetry, "Adeo ut, teste libro Elfredi, de quo superius dixi, nullo unquam ætate par ei fuerit quisquam poesin Anglicam posse facere, tantum componere, eadem apposite vel canere vel dicere. Denique commemorat Elfredus carmen triviale quod adhuc vulgo cantitatur Aldelmum fecisse." By the next paragraph, Alfred seems to have reasoned upon the subject. His manual was therefore the repository of his own occasional literary reflections; for Malmsbury adds, speaking still of Alfred, "*Adjiciens causam qua probet rationabiliter, tantum virum his quæ videantur frivola, instituisse populum eo tempore semibarbarum, parum divinis sermonibus intentum, statim cantatis missis, cursitare solitum,*" p. 342.

⁴⁰ Et ædificia supra omnem antecessorum suorum consuetudinem venerabiliora et pretiosiora nova sua machinatione facere. Asser, 43.

BOOK
V.

useful and appropriate.⁴¹ He was so earnest in these improvements, that he procured from many nations innumerable artificers, versed in every sort of building, and he regularly appropriated a sixth of his yearly revenues to pay their expences, and remunerate their labour.⁴²

Ship-
building.

His talent and cultivation of naval architecture have been already noticed.

Workman-
ship in gold.

He also taught his workers in gold,⁴³ and, by his instructions, occasioned many things to be incomparably executed (we use the epithet of his contemporary) in gold and silver.⁴⁴ One specimen of his talent in this art yet exists to us in a jewel of gold, which was found near Athelney.⁴⁵

In the less valuable pursuits of hunting, falconry, hawking, and coursing, he was also distinguished.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Asser, 58.

⁴² Asser, 66.

⁴³ Asser, 43.

⁴⁴ Asser, 58.

⁴⁵ See the preceding note in page 259. On one side is a rude outline of a human figure apparently sitting, and holding what seem

like two flowers. On the other side is a flower; it is much ornamented, and the workmanship is said to be excellent. The inscription expresses, that it was made by Alfred's orders.

⁴⁶ Asser, 43.

CHAP. II.

Alfred's Moral Character.

WE have contemplated Alfred as the student, and the man of literature. Let us proceed to review his conduct in more interesting relations.

CHAP.
II.

To educate our children in the best improvements and noblest virtues of our times, is to perform a duty the most sacred which we owe to society, and its parent. If, as reason hopes, and revelation assures us, He, who called man into being, is interested in his concerns, no event can more propitiate his favour, than the gradual improvement of his creation. If one idea can predominate over others in the divine œconomy of human affairs, it is reasonable to believe, that it must be the desire of our moral and intellectual progression. Whoever leaves his offspring more informed, and more virtuous than himself, accelerates this favourite scheme of supreme goodness, and claims the gratitude of society whom he benefits.

Alfred was a great example to posterity in this path of duty. He was as solicitous to improve his family as himself. He had several children; some died in their infancy.* Æthelfleda, Edward, Ethelgiva, Alfritha, and Æthelweard, survived him. Edward and Alfritha were educated in the royal court with great attention. They were accustomed to filial duty

* Asser, mentioning his living children, adds, "Exceptis his qui in infantia morte præveniente præoccupati sunt," p. 42. Rudborne mentions that Edmund was his first-born, whom his father had crowned as his intended successor. He died a little before

his father, and was buried in the old monastery at Winchester, "as appears," says Rudborne, "by his marble on his tomb, on the north side of the altar, which is inscribed, Hic jacet Edmundus Rex filius Aldredi regis." Hist. Mag. Wint. p. 207.

towards their parent, and to behave with mildness and affability towards others, whether strangers or natives. Asser remarks, that they retained these estimable qualities at the period in which he wrote. They were induced to improve their minds with the liberal learning which could then be obtained. Besides the hymns of devotion, they were studiously taught Saxon books, and particularly Saxon poetry; and they were accustomed to frequent reading.*

Æthelweard, his youngest son, received a sort of public education; he was committed to the diligent care of proper teachers, with almost all the noble children of the province, and with many of inferior ranks. There they were all assiduously instructed in Latin and Saxon: they learned also the art of writing, to which literature owes its existence. By these institutions, the season of their youth was employed to inform and enlarge their minds. When their matured age gave the requisite strength, they were exercised in hunting, and those robust arts, which, by the habits of society at that time, were made honourable and popular.†

The most exquisite luxury which aged parents can enjoy, when the charms of life and all the pleasures of sense are fast fading around them, is to see their parental care rewarded by a dutiful, affectionate, and intelligent offspring. Alfred enjoyed this happiness, which he had so well merited. Æthelfleda, his eldest, became a woman of very superior mind: such were its energies, that they even reached a masculine strength. She is extolled, in the ancient chronicles, as the wisest lady in England. Her brother Edward governed his life in its best actions by her counsels. After she was married to Ethered, the governor of Mercia, she built innumerable cities, and on all occasions displayed a statesman's skill, and an Amazonian activity.‡

* Asser, 43.

† Asser, 43. Æthelweard lived twenty-one years after his father, and died 922, in

the beginning of the reign of Athelstan. Matt. West. 359.

‡ The difficulty and sufferings of her first

The reign of Edward was distinguished by its vigour and prosperity. Some of the last instructions of Alfred to this son have been popularly preserved,⁵ and they deserve to be quoted, for their pathetic simplicity, their political wisdom, and the proof which they afford of this monarch's anxiety for the welfare of his subjects.

"Thus," quoth Alfred, "my dear son, set thee now beside me, and I will deliver thee true instructions. My son, I feel that my hour is coming. My countenance is wan. My days are almost done. We must now part. I shall to another world, and thou shalt be left alone in all my wealth. I pray thee (for thou art my dear child) strive to be a father, and a lord to thy people. Be thou the children's father, and the widow's friend. Comfort thou the poor, and shelter the weak; and, with all thy might, right that which is wrong. And, son, govern thyself, by law; then shall the Lord love thee, and God above all things shall be thy reward. Call thou upon him to advise thee in all thy need, and so shall he help thee, the better to compass that which thou wouldst."⁶

parturition, deterred her from the chance of a repetition. She protested, that it did not become a king's daughter to pursue any pleasure which was attended with such inconvenience. *Malmsb.* 46. He describes her, "Favor civium, pavor hostium, immodici cordis fœmina.—Virago potentissima multum fratrem juvare consiliis, in urbibus extruendis non minus valere, non discernas potiore fortuna, an virtute; ut mulier viros domesticos protegeret, alienos terreret." *Ib.* 46. The *Chronicle MS.* *Nero. A.* 6. says of her, "Per cujus animum frater suus Edwardus multo melius in regno actus suos dirigebat," p. 6.

⁵ This is the conclusion of the *Cotton MSS.* of the precepts, and instructions of Alfred, in *Galba. A.* 19. now spoilt. *Spelman* 127—131. has quoted part. He says, fairly, "I cannot think it fit to offer them into the world as an instance of what the king composed; for they are not his very work in the Saxon tongue, but a miscellany collection of some later author, who, according to his own faculty, hath, in a broken English, put together such of the sayings of

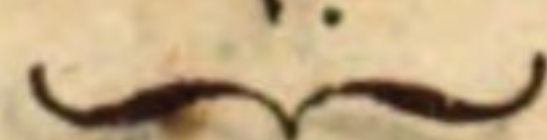
king Alfred, as he met withal," p. 125. *Wanley* says, the fragment is in Norman Saxon, "circa tempus Henrici II. aut Richardi I. conscriptum in quo continentur quædam ex proverbiiis et apothegmatis Ælfredi regis sapientissimi." p. 231.

⁶ *Spelman*, p. 131. It may be curious to quote, in the original phrase, the beginning of this collection:

"At Sifford seten Thaines manie,
Fele Biscopes and fele boc lered,
Erles prude ⁊ Knihtes egloche.
Ther was Egle Alfrich of the lage swuth wise,
And ec Alfred ⁊ Engle hirde, Engle darling.
On Englonde he was king. Hem he gan leren
Swo him heren mihten, hu hi here lif leden
scolden.
Alfred he was on Englelond a king well
swithe strong.
He was king and clerk. Well he luvied Gods
werk:
He was wise on his word, and war on his
speeche.
He was the wiseste man that was on Engle-
lond."

Ib. p. 127.

The



Æthelweard became a man celebrated for his learning.⁷

Alfritha obtained an honourable marriage.⁸ We have mentioned, in a preceding chapter,⁹ Baldwin, with the iron-arm, Count of Flanders, who carried off, with friendly violence, Judith, the widow of Ethelwulf, and of Alfred's brother Ethelbald. The son of this marriage, which the king of France at last sanctioned, was Baldwin the Bald. It was he who obtained the hand of Alfritha; their offspring was Arnulf,¹⁰ who is mentioned with expressions of celebrity, and who succeeded his father in 918.¹¹ From a descendant of Arnulf was born Mathilda, the wife of William the Conqueror.

His arrangement of his officers.

It is the invariable dictate of benevolence, never to be inattentive to the comforts of others. Alfred displayed this accomplished temper in his arrangement of his household. He divided all his noble attendants into three bodies, and he regulated their personal services with a kind regard to their convenience, as well as to his own. He exacted the attendance of one of the divisions for a month, and afterwards allowed the persons who composed it to return home to their families and affairs, while another supplied their place for the same period.¹² By this regular routine, Alfred was carefully served, and an ample time was afforded to his attendants to watch over their private concerns. He was also scrupulously exact in the distribution and application of his yearly revenue.

The 5th arricle is worth quoting in Spelman's translation. "Thus," quoth Alfred, "without wisdom, wealth is worth little. Though a man had an hundred and seventy acres sown with gold, and all grew like corn, yet were all that wealth worth nothing unless that of an enemy one could make it become his friend. For what differs gold from a stone, but by discreet using of it?" p. 130.

⁷ To this son, Alfred, by his will, devised land in seventeen places, besides that of the Weal district, and 500 pounds.

⁸ Alfred bequeathed to her 100 pounds, and three manors.

⁹ P. 189.

¹⁰ Her relation, Ethelwerd, thus speaks of this marriage: "Alfred misit Alfhrythe filiam suam ad partes Germaniæ Baldwino in matrimonium qui genuit ab ea filios duos Athulfum viret Earnulfum duas filias quoque Ealshwidet Earmentruth." Prologus Ethelw. p. 831. The Chronicon Sithense in Bouquet's Recueil, t. 9. p. 74. places the marriage in 898. The Chronicon Alberici mistakes both the name and parentage of the lady, for it calls her Ethelwinda, and makes her Alfred's grand-daughter, filiam filiæ suæ. Bouq. t. 9. p. 61.

¹¹ Bouquet's Recueil, t. 9. p. 152.

¹² Asser, 65.

He ordered his officers to divide it into two general portions. These portions he again subdivided, and appropriated each division to a peculiar and inalienable service.

One of his allotments, a sixth of his income, he set apart for his warriors and noble attendants; he gave to each according to his dignity and to his services. Another sixth he devoted to the workmen in architecture, whom he collected from several nations. Another sixth he appropriated to foreigners who came to him, whatever might be their country, whether remote or near, whether they claimed his bounty, or awaited its voluntary descent; they received each a portion according to their worthiness, which was given with admirable discretion.¹³

The other half of his revenue was consecrated to religious objects. This he also separated again, and commanded his officers to put it into four shares. One of these, being one-eighth of his whole income, was prudently administered to the poor of every nation who came to him. In distributing this, he remembered the axiom of pope Gregory: "Give not little to him who needs much, nor much to him who needs little; refuse not to the man who should have something, and give not to him who deserves nothing." Another eighth was paid to the two monasteries he built, for their maintenance. Another eighth was for the school which he had diligently made up from many nobles of his nation. Another eighth was dispersed among the neighbouring monasteries of West Saxony and Mercia. In some years he made donations to the churches and clergy in Wales, Cornwall, France, Bretagne, Northumbria, and Ireland, according to his ability.¹⁴

Alfred was an exact economist of his time, without which indeed nothing great can be achieved. He had not those heralds of the lapse of time which we can make so minute and exact; but he was sensible, that to do all he projected, he must divide his day, and appropriate every part.

¹³ Asser, 65, 66. Florence.

¹⁴ Asser, 67.

The darkness of the night afforded him no natural means of measuring the progress of the revolving globe; and as clouds and rain often concealed the sun, which is the only chronometer of uncultivated man, he was compelled to frame some method of marking his day into regular intervals.¹⁵ Mechanics were then so little known, either in theory or practice, that Alfred had not the aid of this science, from which most of our comforts, both domestic and political, have arisen. He used a simple expedient: his chaplains, by his orders, procured wax, and he ordered seventy-two denarii of it to be made into six equal candles, each candle to be twelve inches long, which were separately marked. These candles successively used, lasted through the whole twenty-four hours, and of course every inch marked the lapse of twenty minutes; but sometimes the wind rushing in through the windows and doors, the numerous chinks of the walls,¹⁶ or the slender covering of the tents, consumed the candles with undue celerity. To cure this evil, which confused his calculation, he thought skilfully and wisely, says Asser;¹⁷ and the result of this skill and wisdom was the invention of lanthorns. He found that the white horn became pellucid like glass,¹⁸ and with this and wood, a case for his candle was (mirabiliter) admirably made. By these schemes, which our clocks and watches make us deride, he obtained what he wanted, an exact admeasurement of the lapse of time. We have not a correct detail of its appropriation. Asser's general statement, that he consecrated half his time to God,¹⁸ gives no distinct idea, because we find, that his liberal mind in the distribution of his revenue thought

¹⁵ The king of the Franks had an advantage in this respect above Alfred; for, in 807, Charlemagne was presented by the king of Persia with a superb clock. "Horologium ex orichalco, arte mechanica mirifice compositum, in quo duodecim horarum cursus ad clepsydrum vertebatur, cum totidem æreis pilulis, quæ ad completionem horarum decidebant et casu suo subjectum sibi cymbalum tinnire faciebant; additis in eodem ejusdem

numeri equitibus qui per 12 fenestras completis horis exhibant et impulsu egressionis suæ totidem fenestras quæ priuserant apertæ, clauderant." Annales Car. Mag. Astron. p. 35. Reuberi.

¹⁶ This is curious language of a royal palace.

¹⁷ Consilio que artificiose atque sapienter invento, p. 68.

¹⁸ Asser, 67.

that, to apportion money for a school, was devoting it to the Supreme. Malmsbury's account is, that one-third of the natural day and night was given to sleep and refreshment; one-third to the affairs of his kingdom; and one-third to those duties which he considered as sacred.¹⁹ This indistinct statement cannot now be amplified.

One of the principal features of Alfred's useful life, was his ardent piety. From the gross and illiberal superstitions which have been connected with religion, and from the frauds and hypocrisy which have been sometimes practised under her venerable name, piety, although one of the native flowers of the uncorrupted heart, has lost much of its influence upon mankind. Philosophy has taught us to discredit priestcraft; and the dread of the evils which this has produced, has greatly alienated many from religion itself.

But although this change of opinion is an extreme very naturally resulting from some part of the former experience of mankind, it is not a decision which wisdom and knowledge will ultimately sanction. Religion is as necessary to the happiness of man, and to the healthful continuance and expected melioration of society, as superstition and ignorance are injurious and debasing: and of all religions, none can be compared with Christianity, either in intellect, morals, or beneficence. It has raised the kingdoms where it has prevailed, to a proud superiority over the rest of the world; and it has given a beauty, a richness, and an utility to the human character, which we shall in vain look for under any other system.

Religion was one of the earliest offsprings of the human intellect, and indeed appears to be inseparable from it. But there are some dispositions to whom it is peculiarly congenial and gratifying; and Alfred was one of those characters who have delighted in its exercise.

¹⁹ Malmsbury, 45.

By other men, piety may have been taken up as a mask, or worn as a habit; by Alfred it was applied to its great and proper use, to the correction of immorality, to the advancement of virtue, and to the encouragement of knowledge.

Alfred, like other men, inherited the passions and frailties of mortality; he felt immoral tendencies prevalent in his constitution, and he found that he could not restrain his voluptuous desires. With this experience mankind in general rest satisfied; they feel themselves prompted to vicious gratifications; they take the tendencies of nature as their excuse, and they freely indulge.

But the mind of Alfred emancipated itself from such sophistry: he disdained to palter with his moral sense; he knew that his propensities were immoral; and though a prince, he determined not to be their slave. He found the power of his reason to be inadequate to subdue them; and he therefore had recourse to the aids of religion. His honoured friend assures us, that to protect himself from vice, he rose alone at the first dawn of day, and privately visited churches and their shrines, for the sake of prayer. There, long prostrate, he besought the great moral legislator to strengthen his good intentions. So sincere was his virtuous determination, that he even implored the dispensation of some affliction which he could support, and which would not, like blindness or leprosy, make him useless and contemptible in society, as an assistant to his virtue. With frequent and earnest devotion, he preferred this request; and when at no long interval the disorder of the ficus came upon him, he welcomed its occurrence, and converted it to a moral utility, though it attacked him severely.²⁰ However variously with our present habits, we may appreciate the remedy with which Alfred chose to combat his too ardent passions, we cannot refuse our applause to his magnanimity. His abhorrence of vice, his zeal for practical virtue, would do honour to any private

²⁰ Asser, 41, 42.

man of the most regular habits ; but in a prince, chartered to indulge, by the dishonest flattery and seductive examples inseparable from his station, it was noble beyond applause.²¹

It is an agreeable instance of Alfred's good humour, that after his restoration, he was in the habit of narrating to his friends the adventures of his adversity, with lively pleasantry.²²

There is one little incident attached to the memory of Alfred, which, as it exists in an author who seems to have been curious in searching into ancient remains,²³ may be mentioned here, that nothing concerning so great a man be lost.

One day as he was hunting in a wood, he heard the cry of an infant in a tree, and ordered his huntsmen to examine the place. They ascended the branches, and found at top, in an eagle's nest, a beautiful child, dressed in purple, with golden bracelets, the marks of nobility on his arms. The king had him brought down and baptized, and well educated ; from the accident, he named the foundling Nestingum. His grandson's daughter is stated to have been one of the ladies for whom Edgar indulged an improper passion.

We will close our account of Alfred's moral character by one shining trait. An author who lived at the period of the Norman conquest, in mentioning some of the preceding kings with short appropriate epithets, names Alfred, with the simple but expressive addition of " the truth teller."²⁴

²¹ This habit of devotion continued with him through life. Asser, 44.

²² Malinsbury, 43.

²³ This is Johannes Tinmuth, whose MSS. have not yet been published, though they appear to contain some curious particulars. I find an extract from his history in the Bodleian Library, L. 21. quoted by Dugdale, Monasticon, 1. p. 256.

²⁴ Hermann's miracula Edmundi script. circa 1070. MS. Cotton Library, Tiberius, B. 2. It follows Abbo's life of this king. It is very beautifully written. P. 21. he says, " Elueredi Veridici." In his epithets of the kings, he seems to have closely followed their traditional biography, for he calls Edred, " debilis pedibus," which is a very marking trait.

CHAP. III.

Alfred's Public Conduct.

BOOK
V.

THE conduct of kings affects the whole nation which contemplates it. The fortunes of human nature are in their hands. Virtue and intellect flourish as their conduct is wise and moral; and nations prosper or decline, as the measures of the executive authority are salutary or ignoble.

No sovereign ever shaped his conduct with more regard to the public happiness than Alfred. He seems to have considered his life but as a trust to be used for the benefit of his people; and his plans for their welfare were intelligent and great.

His predominant wish was their mental and moral improvement. His letter to his bishop, prefixed to his translation of Gregory's *Pastorals*, and already cited,¹ breathes this principle throughout. To communicate to others the knowledge which we possess, he even states to be a religious duty. He laments the ignorance which overspread his land; he desires that all the youth, who had pecuniary means, should learn to read English; he gently censures former students who had not put their knowledge into a popular form, by translating it into the vernacular tongue; he devotes his own leisure, and he calls upon his literary clergy to devote theirs, to the translating into English the books they possessed. He led the way with taste and judgment in his historical and philosophical translations: he seems to place his glory in the intellectual advancement of his rude countrymen.

His correspondent, the French archbishop, also bears testimony to the same spirit.² The translation of Gregory's

¹ From p. 295—298 of this volume.

² See Wise, p. 123.

Pastorals could have no other meaning than to rouse the clergy to labour for the moral emendation of his people; and, at the same time that we surrender this book to disapprobation, it may be proper to remark, that the principle upon which the king recommended it to his clergy was unquestionably just. We cannot look round the world without perceiving how much the morality of a people depends upon the sagacity, the knowledge, and the virtue of its appropriated preceptors. Why is the fair influence of true religion lessening among us, but because the appointed guardians of our morals are not always careful to acquire the talents, and to exert the conduct which will interest the thoughtless, impress the dissolute, and satisfy the doubting? In every age the world requires, from its moral teachers, example, persuasion, and conviction. The clergy of Alfred were not distinguished for either. The king knew no other book which at all aimed at educating them, to influence honourably, as well as to exhort; and it was his misfortune, not his fault, to meet with cunning instead of wisdom, with art instead of knowledge, with mischief instead of utility.

The school which he established for his nobles,³ and the masters which he provided for high and low, who were educated with his son Æthelweard,⁴ are proofs of his desire to augment the knowledge of his country.

His invitations to his court, of learned foreigners and skilful artizans; his search around his dominions for men of literary attainments; and his munificent patronage to all whose talents came within his notice, concur to demonstrate his laudable anxiety to improve his people.

He lived in an age, when to promote the general welfare was an idea which seldom influenced the conduct.⁵ His plans

³ Scholæ quam ex multis suæ propriæ gentis nobilibus studiosissime congregaverat. Asser, 67.

sub diligenti magistrorum cura traditus est. Asser, 43.

⁴ Cum omnibus pene totius regionis nobilibus infantibus et etiam multis ignobilibus,

⁵ This is a feature which Asser gives of his contemporaries, "Qui nullum aut parvum voluntarie pro communi regni necessitate vellent subire laborem, p. 58.

to benefit his subjects, were therefore counteracted by their prejudices and their ignorance. Many of his royal exhortations were not obeyed; even the castles which he advised, or ordered his nobility to build, to protect their own lands, against the Northmen, were reluctantly begun. It often happened that the ravages, which his advice was meant to prevent, occurred before the landholders would obey his foresight. Then, when they had lost their families and property, they mourned their folly with a repentance, says Asser, that could neither restore their slain relations, redeem their captive friends, nor even support themselves with common subsistence.⁶

But Alfred was not discouraged by the tardiness of his subjects. By mild expostulation, by reasoning, by gentle flattery, or by express command; or in case of obstinate disobedience, by severe chastisement, he overcame the pertinacity of vulgar folly; and wisely made his bishops, earls, ministers, and public officers, exert themselves for the common benefit of all his kingdom.⁷ Among other things, he was inflexible in exacting from all a competence for their offices. To produce this, he compelled them to study literature. Even they who had been illiterate from their infancy, earls, governors, and ministers, were compelled to learn to read and write,⁸ choosing rather to endure the painful toil, than to lose their preferment. If from age, or peculiar dulness of intellect, they could not be taught themselves, their son or some kinsman, or if none, some freeman or slave, educated for the purpose, was ordered to recite before them Saxon books, both day and night.⁹

His public demeanour was very affable, mixed with decorous pleasantry; he was eager to join in the investigation of things unknown,¹⁰ for the curiosity of his mind was insuppressible.

⁶ Asser, 60.

⁷ Ibid. 59.

⁸ So I construe the expressions, "Literarum arti studerent." Asser, 71.

⁹ Asser, 71. These passages of Asser are very curious.

¹⁰ Et maxima et incomparabili contra omnes homines affabilitate atque jocunditate et ignotarum rerum investigationi solerter se jungebat. Asser, 44.

Many Franks, Frisians, and other neighbouring nations, willingly came to submit to his authority, both noble and ignoble. He loved them all like his own people, received them honourably, and gave them both money and power.¹¹

His bishops and clergy, his nobles and servants, he treated with paternal affection; he was indefatigable in his endeavours to educate such of their children as were in the royal court, in every valuable morality; and he himself did not disdain to assist in their scholastic tuition.¹²

His embassy to India, to the shrine of St. Thomas, is as expressive of the mind and spirit of Alfred as any other action of his life. No other potentate in Europe could in that day have conceived it; because no other had acquired that knowledge which would have interested them in a country so remote and unknown. The embassy displays not only the extent of Alfred's information, but that searching curiosity, which characterizes his understanding.

His embassy
to India.

The journey is stated by several chroniclers. The Saxon Chronicle,¹³ Florence of Worcester,¹⁴ Radulph,¹⁵ and Bromton,¹⁶ simply mention, that Suithelm, the bishop of Shireburn, carried the benevolence of Alfred to India, to Saint Thomas, and returned in safety. Huntingdon,¹⁷ and Alured of Beverley,¹⁸ express that the embassy was sent in a discharge of a vow which the king had made. Matthew of Westminster,¹⁹ and Malmsbury, mention the curiosities which Suithelm brought back with him.

Malmsbury, who gives the fullest account of the incident,

¹¹ Asser, 44.

¹² This I presume is the meaning of omnibus bonis moribus instituere et literis imbueri *solum* die noctuque inter cetera non desinebat. Asser, 44.

¹³ Sax. Chron. p. 86.

¹⁴ 883. Assero Scireburnensi episcopo defuncto succedit Suithelmus qui regis Alfredi elemosynam ad S. Thomam, Indiam detulit, indeque prospere retulit. Flor. Wig. 320.

¹⁵ Rad. Dic. 451. He dates it 887.

¹⁶ Bromton, 812.

¹⁷ Alfredus autem misit elemosynam suam Romæ et etiam in Indiam ad S. Thomam secundum votum quod fecerat quando hostilis exercitus hyemavit apud Londoniam. Hunt. 350.

¹⁸ L. 7. p. 106.

¹⁹ Matt. West. 333. He says, that Suithelm brought back precious stones.

says, that the king sent many presents over sea to Rome, and to St. Thomas, in India; that Sigheilm, the bishop of Shireburn, was his ambassador, who penetrated with great success to India, to the admiration of the age; and that he brought with him, on his return, many foreign gems and aromatic liquors, the produce of the country.²⁰ In another passage, Malmsbury declares, that some of those gems were to be seen in his days, in the monuments of the church.²¹

In considering this extraordinary incident, we are led immediately to inquire whether it was believed that Saint Thomas ever had been in India; whether in the age of Alfred he was believed to have died there; and whether at that time there were Christians living there. Our scepticism may also desire to know if such journeys were in those days attempted, because if these four questions can be answered affirmatively, the assertions of our chroniclers will not be counteracted by any improbability in the circumstance which they attest.

That St. Thomas the Apostle extended his annunciations of Christianity into India, is asserted by several fathers,²² by the Syrian authors,²³ and by the Christians, who have lived and are living in the Indian peninsula.²⁴

²⁰ Et trans mare Romam et ad Sanctum Thomam in Indiam multa munera misit. Legatus in hoc missus Sigelmus Schireburnensis episcopus cum magna prosperitate, quod quivis hoc seculo miretur, Indiam penetravit: inde rediens exoticos splendoris gemmarum et liquores aromatum, quorum illa humus ferax est, reportavit. De Gestis, p. 44.

²¹ Nonnullæ illarum adhuc in ecclesiæ monumentis visuntur. Malmsb. De Pont. 248.

²² Fabricius remarks, that vulgo India Thomæ tribuitur, and cites Ambrosius, in Ps. 45. Hieronymum Epist. 148. and Nicetas, with others, Codex Apocryph. 1. p. 687. Assemani, in his elaborate Bibliotheca Orientalis, quotes most largely on this subject. Origen, Eusebius, Rufinus, Socrates, and others, assign Parthia to Thomas. To this India is added by Gregory Nazianzen,

Hippolytus, Sophronius, and all the Martyrologists. Tom. 3. pars 2. p. 25. ed. Romæ 1728.

²³ The collection of Assemani is peculiarly valuable, for its introducing to the knowledge of Europe many Syrian authors, from whose works he translates copious extracts out of the Syriac into Latin. He asserts of the Syrians, that Thomam Indis prædicasse ubique affirmant, p. 30.—Again, non Indiarum Christiani sed etiam Assyriæ ac Mesopotamiæ Nestoriani affirmant eum Indorum, Sinensiumque Apostolum fuisse, p. 436. He adds his Syriac authorities. The Orientalist Du Guignes, says, "Une foule des auteurs tant Grecs que Syriens paroissent ne pas douter que St. Thomas n'ait pénétré dans l'Inde pour y prêcher la religion Chrétienne." Acad. des Inscript. v. 54. p. 323.

²⁴ Mr. Gibbon says, "When the Portuguese first opened the navigation of India,

That the opinion had been afloat before the time of Alfred, is obvious, from the assertions of the fathers: ²⁵ that it was accredited in the west of Europe, in the sixth century, is proved by a curious passage of Gregory of Tours, the parent of Frankish history, who has transmitted to us the narration which he had received from one Theodore. ²⁶ This man professed to have travelled to India, and described the monastery which had been erected there, over the body of St. Thomas. That the same notions remained to the days of Alfred, is as clear; because the account drawn up by Elfric, who lived at the close of the tenth century, states at length the romance which the respected traditions of preceding ages had preserved concerning the Indian journey of St. Thomas. ²⁷ It was in full credit in the twelfth century, for Ordericus makes it a part of his ecclesiastical history. ²⁸

But were there any Christians at that time living in India? Because, if not, the embassy was ridiculous. The generally diffused tradition may have suggested to Alfred the idea of the scheme; but unless there was the local truth of Christians residing in a particular part of India, the king must have been

the Christians of St. Thomas had been seated for ages on the coast of Malabar, and the difference of their character and colour attested the mixture of a foreign race. In arms, in arts, and possibly in virtue, they excelled the natives of Hindostan." Vol. 4. quarto, p. 599.

²⁵ What Hippolytus states of Thomas is the epitome of every other tradition. It is, that he perished in the Indian city of Calamine, and was buried there. Fab. Cod. 689.

²⁶ Ordericus Vitalis says of Gregory, whom he quotes, "Scribit quod a Theodoro quodam de Sancto Thoma audivit qui tunc temporis in Indiam peregrinatus fuerat et inde reversus hæc inter cætera narravit," p. 414. As Gregory of Tours accredited Theodore, it is obvious that his narration, whether true or false, was admitted in our hemisphere in the sixth century.

²⁷ The narration of Elfric exists yet in

MS. in the Anglo-Saxon, in the Cotton Library, Caligula, A. 14. and Julius, E. 7. He says, he translated it on the importunity of the venerable Dux Ethelwold; that he had himself doubted for some time whether he ought to put it into English, because St. Austin objected to one part of the narration; but that at last he determined to omit this, and to translate the rest concerning St. Thomas's death. This Anglo-Saxon history of St. Thomas contains an abridgment of the Apostolical History ascribed to Abdias. The amiable Melancthon says of this, "Legat has qui volet.—Ac suaserim potius ne legant omnino. Sunt enim illa scripta mirifica et referta falsitate manifesta." See Fabricius, Cod. Apoc. 393. and 687. for the Legend.

²⁸ See it p. 410—414. Hic in Anglia natus est, 1075. Du Chesne præfatio.

a dreamer. To have delegated a mission to wander over the extensive district of India, till they had found a city called Calamine, and the shrine of St. Thomas, without any previous topographical indication of a particular district, was too wild a thought to have been countenanced by an Alfred.

But on investigating ancient remains, we find the fact to be as authentic as it is curious, that there were Christians then flourishing in the Indian peninsula.

The Syriac letter of Jesuabius Adjabenus, the Nestorian patriarch, to Simeon the metropolitan of the Persians, written in the seventh century,²⁹ yet exists, and satisfactorily expresses the fact. It calls to the metropolitan's recollection, that he had "shut the doors of the episcopal imposition of hands before many people of India." It states that, "the sacerdotal succession is interrupted among the people of India, nor in India only, which, from the maritime borders of Persia, extends to Colon, a space of above 1,200 parasangs, but even lies in darkness in your Perisian region."³⁰

That Christianity had in these times obtained footing in India, is a reasonable inference, from the larger fact of its existence in China, in the seventh and eighth centuries.³¹ About the year 720, Salibazacha, the Nestorian patriarch, created metropolitans in China, as well as at Samarcand;³² and Timotheus, who had the same dignity from 788 to 820, appointed David to the head of the ecclesiastics in China.³³ If

²⁹ Jesuabius died 660. Assemani, Bib. Or. t. 2. p. 420. and t. 3. p. 615. Assemani gives the Syriac, with a Latin version.

³⁰ "Quod sicuti fores impositionis manus Episcopatus coram multis Indiæ populis occlusistis." Tom. 3. pars 2. p. 27. "Interrupta est ab Indiæ populis sacerdotalis successio nec India solum quæ a maritimis regni Persarum finibus usque ad Colon spatio ducentarum supra mille parasangarum extenditur, sed et ipsa Persarum regio vestra—in tenebris jacet." Ib.

³¹ On this subject I follow, as I think I

ought, the guidance of the learned Assemani. He says, "Sub cognomine Gadalsi An. Ch. 636. prædicatores Evangelii in ipsarum Sinarum regnum penetrasse, ex monumento lapideo, anno 781, erecto compertum est," p. 28.

³² "Salibazacha item Nestorianorum patriarcha (Bib. Or. t. 3. p. 346) circa annum 720 Heriæ, Samarcandæ et Sinarum Metropolis creavit." Assem. p. 28.

³³ "Timotheus qui ab anno 778 ad annum 820 Nestorianis præfuit, Davidem (tom. 3. p. 489.) Sinensibus metropolitam dedit." Assem. p. 28.

in the eighth and ninth centuries, Christianity so flourished in China, as to support a metropolitan dignity, no one will hesitate to believe that it was existing in India.

The most detailed statement on this subject, is that of the Grecian traveller Cosmas, surnamed Indico Pleustes; if that really be the name of the author of the Christian topography,³⁴ he performed his voyage in 522.³⁵ He mentions Christians not only in other places of the East, but in India, in Ceylon, and, what comes nearest to our subject, in Male, which we call Maliapour.³⁶

It is to the zeal and activity of the Nestorian Christians, that this extensive dissemination is chiefly to be attributed. Their traditions, or history on this subject, demand our respect. In 1504, their Indian bishops stated to the then Nestorian patriarch, that there was a place called the house of St. Thomas; that it was twenty-five days journey from Cananore; that it was on the sea in the city of Meliapour.³⁷

From the ninth century to the sixteenth, the state of the Indian Christians varied.³⁸ Ludovicus, who travelled in India, and in many parts of Asia and Africa, about the year 1500, mentions, that he found Christians in an Indian city, who called themselves of St. Thomas;³⁹ and in 1504, the bishops

³⁴ Gibbon follows the learned in so naming him, v. 4. p. 79. quarto. Fabricius intimates, that as Indicopleustes alludes to his Indian navigation, so Cosmas may express that he wrote the topography of the world. Bib. Græca, 2. p. 612. This is of no moment. The author was an extensive merchant; he lived long in Egypt; he wrote at Alexandria, and was, or became a monk. Fabr. p. 613.

³⁵ His *Topographica Christiana* is in Montfaucon's *Collections of the Fathers*, t. 2. p. 113—436. and part of it in Thevenot, *Relations curieuses*. Gibbon, p. 79.

³⁶ "In Taprobana insula ad interiorem Indiam ubi Indicum pelagus extat Ecclesia Christianorum habetur ubi clerici et fideles reperiuntur—Similiter in Male ut vocant ubi gignitur piper—Itemque apud Bactros, Hunnos, Persas, reliquos Indos, &c. ecclesiæ infinitæ sunt." Cosmas, cited by Assem. p. 437, and 28.

³⁷ Assemani, p. 34. The Mahometans sanction the account of the early establishment of the Christians in India. Ferishtah, in his general History of Hindostan, says, "Formerly, before the rise of the religion of Islam, a company of Jews and Christians came by sea into the country (Malabar) and settled as merchants. They continued to live until the rise of the Mussulman religion." Asiatic Register, Miscel. p. 151.

³⁸ Assemani relates their prosperity and vicissitudes until the arrival of the Portuguese in India, and their fortunes afterwards, p. 441. Renandot declares, that Meliapour was known by the name of St. Thomas Betuma for ages among the Arabs. Ancient Account of India, p. 80.

³⁹ "Illic (hoc est in Caicolon Indiæ urbi) nacti fumus nonnullos Christianos qui Divi Thomæ nuncupantur." L. 6. c. 1. ap. Assem. 451.

in India stated these Christians to be about 30,000 in number.⁴⁰ The archbishop of Goa, who visited the Malabar coast in 1599, mentions, that he found Christians there, and that their chief churches and cities were, Angamale, Cranganor, Cochinum, Coulanum, Meliapora, Calicut, and Cananor.⁴¹ Tachard found them in the mountains of Malabar in 1711;⁴² and the latest accounts declare, that they yet exist in these parts.

Thus then we find, that in the days of Alfred it was believed that St. Thomas perished in India; that there were at that time, and have been up to this century, Christians in the Indian peninsula; and that Meliapour, on the Malabar coast, has been for ages the spot pointed out by local tradition, as the scene of St. Thomas's fate. These facts afforded a good ground for Alfred's embassy. It only remains to inquire if such journeys were in those days undertaken, and if it is probable that the ambassadors, having commenced such an expedition, could have been able to have completed it.

That a Persian ambassador should visit Charlemagne;⁴³ that Arcuulfus should, in the eighth century, travel to Jerusalem, Damascus, and Alexandria;⁴⁴ and that Abel, the patriarch of Jerusalem, should have sent letters with presents, and of course messengers, to Alfred,⁴⁵ are circumstances which make the Indian embassy credible.

We have the account of another journey in the century after Alfred, which also proves that there were spirits then existing, whose curiosity for such distant expeditions prevailed over their fears.

In 970, three monks, desirous to see the places so celebrated

⁴⁰ Assemani quotes them, p. 450.

⁴¹ Assem. 446. and 635.

⁴² Assem. 449.

⁴³ See the Astronomer's Annales Francorum, ann. 807. in Reuberi Germ. Script. p. 35.

⁴⁴ See before, p. 154.

⁴⁵ Asser declares, that he saw and read these letters. "Nam etiam de Hierosolyma

Abel patriarchæ epistolas et dona illi directas vidimus et legimus," p. 58. It appears to me very likely, that the emissaries of Abel supplied Alfred with the local information that he wanted. Mesopotamia was the great seat of the Nestorians, and it is very reasonable to suppose, that the patriarch of Jerusalem, and his officers, were well acquainted with the diffusion of this party.

in the Christian writings, undertook a journey to Palestine, and the Egyptian Babylon. Their itinerary, written by Bernard, one of the travellers, is extant.⁴⁶ They first went to Mount Garganum, in which they found the church of St. Michael. This is near the Gulf of Manfredonia. An hundred and fifty miles brought them to Barre, then a city of the Saracens, but which had once been subject to the Beneventans. This is on the south-east side of Italy; they sought admission to the prince of the city, who was called a sultan, and obtained leave to prosecute their journey with letters to the chief of Alexandria and Babylon, describing their countenances, and the object of their journey.⁴⁷

From Barre, they walked ninety miles to the port of Tarentum, where they found six ships, two going to Tripoli, and two to other parts of Africa, with some captives.⁴⁸ After thirty days sailing they reached Alexandria; here the master of the ship exacted six pieces of gold before he would let them leave it.⁴⁹

They produced to the governor of Alexandria the letter of the sultan of Barre, but it did them no good; a present of thirteen denarii a piece was more serviceable. Bernard remarks, that it was the custom of Alexandria to take the money by weight; he says, six of the solidi and denarii, which they

⁴⁶ It is in MS. in the Cotton Library. Faustina, B. 1. Fabricius says, this itinerary has been printed by Mabillon in his *Acta Benedicti*. I have only seen the Cotton MS. It begins thus: "Anno ab incarnatione Domini nostri Jesu Christi, 970. in nomine domini volentes videre loca sanctorum quæ fuerunt Jerosolymis. Ego Bernardus duobus memet ipsum sociavi fratribus in devotione caritatis ex quibus erat unus ex monasterio Beati Vincenti Beneventani nomine Theodemundus, alter Hispanus nomine Stephanus; igitur adeuntes in urbe papæ Nicolai præsentiam obtinuimus cum sua benedictione nec non at auxilio pergendi desideratam licentiam."

⁴⁷ Inde progressi venimus ad montem Garganum in quo est ecclesia Sancti Michaelis.

—De monte Gargano abeuntes per C. L. miliaria venimus ad civitatem Sarracenorum nomine Barrem quæ dudum subjacebat ditioni Beneventanorum. Quæ civitas supra mare sita duobus est a meridie latissimis munita muris ab aquilone vero mari permanet exposita. Hic itaque petentes principem civitatis illius nomine Suldandum impetravimus cum duabis epistolis omne navigandi negotum. Quarum textus epistolarum principi Alexandriæ nec non et Babiloniæ notitiam vultus nostri vel itineris exponebat. MSS. Faustina.

⁴⁸ MSS. Faust.

⁴⁹ He says, that wishing to go ashore they were hindered, "A principe nautarum qui erat super 60. ut autem nobis copia daretur exeundi dedimus aureos sex." MSS.

carried out with them, weighed only three of those at Alexandria. The governor gave them letters to the chief of Babylon; but by Babylon, it is obvious that Bernard means the city of that name in Egypt, and not the famous Babylon which spread along the Euphrates.⁵⁰

Sailing up the Nile south for six days, they came to the city of Egyptian Babylon.⁵¹ The guards of the place conducted them to the governor; their letters were useless, and they were sent to prison; a present of denarii, as before, released them. In return for this, he made them out letters, which, he said, whoever saw, would in no place or town exact any more. They could not leave this Babylon without a sealed permission, which some more denarii were required to obtain.

Bernard proceeds to describe his journey from Egypt to Jerusalem,⁵² which need not be given here, as enough has been extracted to give some idea of the practicability and course of Oriental expeditions. He mentions one trait of Jerusalem, which shews, that some intercourse was maintained by devotion between these distant places, and the west of Europe. He says, "we were received there in the mansion of hospitality of the most glorious Charlemagne, in which all are received who visit this place for devotion, and who speak the Roman language."⁵³ From Jerusalem they sailed in sixty days, with an unfavourable wind, to Italy.

⁵⁰ MSS.

⁵¹ He states, that Alexandria was on the sea; on the east and west was a monastery; north was the gate of the city. "A meridie habuit introitum Gyon sive Nilus qui regat Egyptum et currit per mediam civitatem intrans in mare in prædicto portu. In quo intrantes navigimus ad meridiem diebus sex et venimus ad civitatem Babiloniae Egypti ubi regnavit quondam Pharaon rex." MSS.

⁵² It is shortly; back up the Nile in three days to Sitinuth; thence to Maalla; thence they sailed to Amiamate. Quæ habuit ab aquilone mare; thence sailed to Tanis, to

Faramea; here was a multitude of camels. The desert of six days journey began from this city; it had only palm-trees; in the middle were two hospitia; the earth was fertile to Gaza; thence to Alariza, to Ramulla, to Emaus Castle, to Jerusalem.

⁵³ Et recepti sumus in hospitali gloriosissimi imperatoris Karoli in quo suscipiuntur omnes qui causa devotionis illum adeunt locum lingua loquentes Romana. Cui adjacet ecclesia in honore Scæ Mariæ nobilissimam habens bibliothecam studio prædicti Imperatoris. MSS.

These particulars shew, that it was very practicable to get to Alexandria and up the Nile, into the interior of Egypt, and to traverse Egypt and Palestine, although among Mahometans. What then should make it more difficult for a traveller to go on through Egypt to Suez, or at Suez to find shipping for the coast of Malabar?

Some further circumstances may be noted which must have considerably facilitated the progress of Alfred's ambassadors. Of these, the great influence of the Nestorian Christians, in the courts of the Mussulman princes, may be ranked among the chief.

Nestorians were frequently appointed, by the Saracen caliphs, to the government of cities, provinces, and towns, especially in Adjabene, and in Assyria.⁵⁴ In the ninth century, these districts were actually under the Nestorian government.⁵⁵

The scribes and physicians of the caliphs and chiefs of Arabia, were also in general Nestorians.⁵⁶ This courtly situation gave them great influence among their own party,⁵⁷ and must have frequently enabled them to extend to their friends a very powerful protection.

Now, as the Nestorians abounded over Persia, Chaldæa, Mesopotamia, Syria, Arabia, and Egypt;⁵⁸ and as Alfred's mission was to one of their Indian colonies, and to do honour to the apostle whom they so much revered, and whose remains they professed to have preserved, his ambassadors would of course experience all the friendship and protection which their leaders could display or obtain. If, from Jerusalem,

⁵⁴ Hinc primo adhibiti a chaliphis ad regimen provinciarum urbium oppidorum ex eadem secta præfecti quorum mentio in historia Nestoriana frequenter occurrit ac præsertim in Adjabene et in Assyria ubi plurimi habitabant. Assemani, p. 96.

⁵⁵ Assem. ib.

⁵⁶ Secundo tam Chaliphæ quam regni Arabici proceres Nestorianis scribis medicis

que usi. He adduces a great many instances, both of physicians and scribes, or secretaries. Assem. 97.

⁵⁷ Horum scribarum medicorum que tanta erat in Christianos suæ sectæ auctoritas ut neque patriarcharum electiones neque ecclesiastica negotia ipsis inconsultis conficerantur. Assem. ib.

⁵⁸ See Assemani, 81.

the Saxon bishop took his journey to the Euphrates, to sail to India from the Persian Gulf; or if, from Alexandria, he went to Suez, and thence navigated from the Red Sea to the coast of Malabar; yet both tracks abounded with Nestorians, and of course with persons willing and able to instruct, to guide, and to protect him.

We may therefore infer, from all these facts, that there is nothing improbable, nor even romantic, in Alfred's embassy to India. The authorities which affirm it are respectable, and, from the credibility which they derive from the other circumstances alluded to, they may be trusted.

No others of Alfred's foreign correspondencies have been transmitted to us, except the compliment from the Jerusalem patriarch; except some donations from the pope,⁵⁹ and several messages and presents from Alfred to Rome.⁶⁰

When the measures are mentioned by which Alfred endeavoured to excite in his subjects a love of letters, it will not be forgotten, that the University of Oxford has been connected with his memory.

The concurring testimonies of some respectable authors seem to prove, that he founded public schools in this city; and therefore the University, which has long existed with high celebrity, and which has enriched every department of literature and science by the talents it has nourished, may claim Alfred as one of its authors, and original benefactors.

But this incident, plain and intelligible as it appears to be, is environed with a controversy which demands some consideration; for it involves nothing less than the decision of the superior antiquity of the two Universities of England. We leave to abler pens the determination of the dispute,⁶¹ and shall only notice a few particulars concerning the first periods of the contest, and the point on which it turns.

⁵⁹ Asser, 39. The pope, at Alfred's request, liberated the Saxon school in Rome from all pecuniary payments. *Ib.*

⁶⁰ Asser, 55.

⁶¹ It has been frequently noticed.

Though a few murmurs had already occasionally disturbed the deep serene of academical study,⁶² yet it was not until the reign of Elizabeth, that the furious war burst out. When this queen of letters visited Cambridge in 1564, the Goddess of Discord unfortunately prompted the Orator of the University to declare, in his harangue, that Cambridge truly claimed a superior antiquity to Oxford.⁶³ He spoke—and peace immediately abandoned the academical walls. Oxford, enraged that an attempt should have been insidiously made to prepossess the ear of majesty to its prejudice, retaliated the aggression, by asserting, in a written composition, to the Queen, when she came to the University in 1566, that it was Oxford, and Oxford only, which could truly boast the earliest foundation.⁶⁴

Wars, horrid wars! became then the business and the amusement of every student. Cantabs and Oxonians arranged themselves to battle, and every weapon of polemical erudition and polemical fury, was raised against each other.

Caius, one of the leaders in the mighty fray, was so alert as to be ready with a manly quarto, in defence of Cambridge, so early as 1574. He said, he came to restore peace;⁶⁵ as if, by assuring the world that Cambridge was in the right, he could ever give tranquillity to Oxford.

Oxford denied the right of an insidious partisan to be a peace-maker; and at last Brian Twyne appeared,⁶⁶ with a book as large and as full as that of Caius, in which the glory of exasperated Oxford was most sturdily maintained. Many combatants at various intervals succeeded, and the conflict

⁶² Some competitions had occurred before. Caius mentions one. In 1533, two Oxonians challenged all Cambridge to a public dispute. He says, that on the first question, "Whether the profession of medicine was preferable to the civil law," they were so pressed by the Cambridge champions, that when the second question, "Whether a condemned woman, who had twice broken the cord, ought to be

hung up the third time," came on, they affected sickness. Caius de Antiq. Cantab. p. 19.

⁶³ Caius de Ant. Cant. p. 3.

⁶⁴ Caius, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Caius, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Antiquitates Acad. Oxon. defenzio. Ox. 1608.

became as ardent as, from the fragility of the materials, it was ineffectual.

Some of the friends of Cambridge managed to see the first stones of their University laid in the 173d year after the flood.⁶⁷ Others, however, who were not blessed with optics which had the faculty of seeing what had never been visible, very wisely postponed the existence of their favourite till about four centuries before the Christian æra.⁶⁸ At that period, they found out one Cantaber, a royal Spanish emigrant, who came to England in the days of Gurguntius, who sent for Greek philosophers from Athens, and gave to Cambridge a local habitation, and a name.⁶⁹

It was easy for Oxford to object, that Cantaber was but one of those airy nothings which the poet or the antiquary, in his frenzy, discerns.⁷⁰ It was not more difficult to laugh at the wise and learned giants, who were placed as the aborigines of our island, and who first cultivated letters.⁷¹ But the Oxonian champion did not content himself with destroying all the superstructures of Cambridge vanity.⁷² The heralds of national ancestry are as fond of their own chimeras, as they are intolerant of the antiquarian progeny of others. Hence, though the advocate of Oxford denied to Cambridge its Cantaber, he conceived it to be just to claim for Oxford a colony of Greek philosophers, who came into the island with Brutus, and

⁶⁷ Anno mundi 1829. Caius, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Anno mundi 3588. Three other dates were also mentioned, 3377, 4095, 4321. Ib.

⁶⁹ For the authorities adduced by Caius on this point, among whom our rhyming Lydgate shines conspicuous, see Ant. Cant. 39—50.

⁷⁰ See Twyne's Attack on the Spaniard, p. 5, 14, &c.

⁷¹ Caius, or his friend, would not admit it to be very absurd to say, that the schools

of Cambridge were built in the time of the giants; for he maintains (but on authorities rather aerial) that the giants, nostræ insulæ aborigines sapientiæ sensum habuisse, probitatem dilexisse et literas excoluisse, p. 14. He proceeds to declare, that Noah was a giant, and he discusses the varying magnitude of this race, p. 17.

⁷² Twyne was so unmerciful as to pull down the pride of Cambridge from Cantaber to the modern dates of Henry I. and Edward II. p. 112. Nay, to humble his rival to the dust, he declares it was a colony of Oxford, p. 130.

established a college at Cricklade,⁷³ which was afterwards translated to Bello Situm, where Oxford now stands.⁷⁴

The fame of Oxford was, however, not wholly intrusted to phantoms. A basis more secure was found for it in a passage printed under the name of Asser; and it is this unfortunate passage which has connected the dispute with the history of Alfred.

An edition of Asser was published from a MS. of Camden, in 1603;⁷⁵ in which a paragraph appeared, stating, that in 886, a discord arose at Oxford between Grymbold and his learned friends whom he had brought with him, and those ancient schoolmen whom he found there, and who refused to obey entirely his institutions. Three years the dissension lasted. Alfred, to appease it, went to Oxford. The ancient schoolmen contended, that before the arrival of Grymbold, letters had flourished there, though the scholars had been fewer; and they proved, by the indubitable testimony of ancient annals, that the ordinations and institutes of this place had been established by some pious and erudite men, as Gildas, Melkin, Nennius, Kentigern, and others, who there grew old in letters; and that St. Germain, who resided half a year at Oxford, had also approved of them. The king recommended peace; but Grymbold, dissatisfied, withdrew to Winchester.⁷⁶

Such is the import of this contested paragraph. If it had been genuine, it of course gave the evidence of Asser, that there had been public schools at Oxford, at least in the fifth and sixth centuries, when Germain and the others lived. Now Cambridge had no such plausible document as this. Its friends

⁷³ Ant. Ox. Apol. 113. This of course meant Greeklade, and this of course was a demonstration of the fact asserted. Camden has even deigned to mention the learned colony of Brutus.

⁷⁴ Ib. 118. Twyne is very angry with Caius for pretending to be a peace-maker; and rather sarcastically taunts at his medi-

cal ability: "Ad quam litem inter utrosque oratores componendam tanquam ad morbum quendum curandum accessit Caius Æsculapii filius," p. 3.

⁷⁵ In his *Anglica, Normannica, &c.* Francf. 1603.

⁷⁶ The passage may be seen in Wise's edition of Asser, p. 52.

had indeed talked of Arthur's charters, but these were soon decried as surreptitious.⁷⁷ The most ancient historical dress that it could assume, with any decorous attention to probability, was Bede's paragraph, about Sigebert establishing schools in East Anglia; and Sigebert lived above a century after Gildas.⁷⁸

But unfortunately for the glory of Oxford, Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, had published, in Saxon types, an edition of Asser in 1574,⁷⁹ from a MS. in which this passage was not to be found. The ancient MS. of Asser, in the Cotton Library, which has been thought to have been written within a century after its author's death, was also without this clause.⁸⁰

Here, then, was the point of an elaborate controversy; was this passage written by Asser? Did Parker insidiously omit it, or did Camden surreptitiously insert it, or was it really wanting in the one MS. and really existing in the other? The controversy had begun before Parker published his Asser, but it was then in its infancy. When Camden's Asser appeared, it was raging in all its violence. Camden's MS. was never produced after it was printed;⁸¹ and no other MSS. can now be obtained to determine the question.

His police.

When Alfred regained his throne, and with that the kingdom of Mercia, he found that the Danish invasions had so destroyed

⁷⁷ See Arthur's diplomas in Caius, who makes the king to have studied there; and see them destroyed by Twyne.

⁷⁸ Bede mentions of Sigebert, that about 630, "Instituit scholam in qua pueri literis erudirentur." Others make of this school many schools, of which Cambridge has been declared to be one. See a long dissertation on this by the editor of Bede, App. 721.

⁷⁹ It is prefixed to his edition of Walsingham.

⁸⁰ This was Otho, A. 12. Wise admits it to have been, eorum omnium qui hodie extant antiquissimus. It was burnt soon after he had collated it. Wise states, that in it, desiderantur etiam alia non pauca; and I perceive that some passages, of greater and

less magnitude, are omitted, as p. 7, 13, 30, and 33. Two others, 28 and 55—64, were inserted in the Cotton MS. in a more modern hand than the rest of the writing. The destruction of this MS. makes Mr. Wise's collated edition exceedingly valuable.

⁸¹ Twyne has left a solemn assertion, that in 1622, he conversed with Camden on the subject, who assured him, that he had edited faithfully his MSS. of Asser, which he thought to be of the age of Richard II. Wood's Hist. et Ant. Ox. p. 9. Indeed, who that knows Camden's character, can ever believe that the fraud, if any, was committed by him. He may have been deceived, but I cannot think that he was the deceiver.

the ancient police of the kingdom, and the regular habits of the inhabitants, that the Anglo-Saxons were infesting each other with predatory depredations.⁸²

The means which he took to remedy this evil, are stated to have been a change of the ancient provincial divisions of England into counties; and the distribution of these into hundreds, which were again subdivided into tenths or tithings. Under these nominal divisions, the population of the country was arranged. Every person living by means not incompatible with law, was directed to belong to some hundred or tenth. Every hundred and tenth were pledged to the preservation of the public peace and security in their districts, and were made answerable for the conduct of their several inhabitants. In consequence of this arrangement, every criminal accused was sure to be apprehended. If he was not produced by the hundred or tenth to which he was attached, the inhabitants of these divisions incurred a general mulct; of course every person in the district was interested in seizing or discovering the offender. If he fled, he must go to other districts, where, not having been marshalled within their jurisdiction, he would be known and punished as an outlaw, because unpledged; for he who was not pledged by some hundred and tenth, experienced all the severity of the law.⁸³ It is added to this statement, that Alfred divided the provincial prefects into two officers, judges and sheriffs.⁸⁴ That golden bracelets were hung up in the public roads, and were not pilfered, is mentioned as a fact, which evidenced the efficacy of his police.

⁸² Ingulf, 28. Malmstury, 44. and the Chronicle of Joannes de Oxenedes. Cott. MSS. Nero, D. 2. This chronicle is not much more than an abridgment of Malmstury.

⁸³ Ingulf, 28. Malmsb. 44.

⁸⁴ *Præfectos vero provinciarum qui antea vicedomini vocabantur in duo officia divisit, id est, in iudices quos nunc justiciarios vo-*

camus et in vice comites qui adhuc idem nomen retinent. Ingulf, 28. We will briefly remark here, that the Welsh anciently had the territorial divisions of cantref, a hundred, which contained two cymmwd; each of these had twelve maenawr, and two tref. In every maenawr were four tref, or towns; in every town four gafael, each of which contained four rhandir; every rhandir was com-

The unsettled state of society in Saxon-England, and that twilight of mind which every where appears at this period, may have justified these severe provisions. They are, however, liable to such objections, that though we may admit them to have been necessary to Alfred, we may express an hope that they will never be imitated. They may have suppressed robbery; they may have perpetuated public peace; but they were calculated to keep society in a bondage the most pernicious. They must have prevented that free intercourse, that incessant communication, that unrestricted travelling, which have produced so much of our political and literary prosperity. They made every hundred and tithing little insulated populations, to which all strangers were odious. By causing every member of each district to become responsible for the conduct of every other, they converted neighbours into spies; they incited curiosity to pry into private conduct; and as selfishness is generally malignant, when in danger of meeting injury, they must have tended to legalize habits of censoriousness and acrimonious calumny.

Alfred is said to have written a book on laws. It is probable, that the selections from the Mosaic jurisprudence which he ordered to be made, and which yet exist in Saxon, is the *dom-boc* alluded to.

That Alfred was assiduous to procure to his people the blessing of a correct and able administration of justice, we have the general testimony of Asser. He not only gave the precept, but he exhibited the example; he was a patient and minute arbiter in judicial investigations, and this chiefly for the sake of the poor, to whose affairs, amongst his other duties, he day and night earnestly applied himself.⁸⁵

posed of sixteen acres. Thus every cantref contained, as the name imports, an hundred towns, or 25,600 acres. *Leges Wallicæ*, p. 157, 158. The preface to these laws states South Wales to have contained sixty-

four cantrefs, and North Wales eighteen. *Ib.* p. 1. The cantref and the *cymmwd* had each a court to determine controversies. *Ib.* 389.

⁸⁵ Asser, 69.

When we reflect that Alfred had, in the beginning of his reign, transgressed on this point, he claims new admiration for his noble self correction. It was highly salutary to his subjects; "for," says Asser, "in all his kingdom, the poor had no helpers, or very few besides him. The rich and powerful, ingrossed with their own concerns, were inattentive to their inferiors. They studied their private, not the public good."⁸⁶

Alfred applied to the administration of justice, because it was then so little understood, and so little valued by the people, that both noble and inferior persons were accustomed to dispute pertinaciously with each other in the very tribunals of justice. What the earls and legal officers adjudged, was disregarded. All resorted to the king's judgment, which, was then respectfully fulfilled. Burthensome as so many legal appeals must have been, he never hesitated to sacrifice his own comfort for the welfare of his subjects. With great discernment, and wonderful patience, he examined every dispute; he reviewed the adjudications made by others in his absence. When he saw that the judges had erred, he called them mildly to him, and either personally, or by confidential persons, inquired if they had erred from ignorance, or malevolence, or avarice. When he found that ignorance had produced a wrong decision, he rebuked the judges for accepting an office for which they were unqualified, and commanded them to improve themselves by study, or to abandon their offices.⁸⁷

The statement of Asser is in general terms. There is an ancient law book existing, which presents to us many instances of Alfred's punishing judges for misconduct; and which proves how highly the English system of judicature is indebted to his wisdom and firmness. The authority to which we allude, is the "Mirroir des Justices," written in Norman French, by

⁸⁶ Asser, 69.

⁸⁷ Ib. 70, 71.

Andrew Horne, in the time of Edward the Second.⁸⁸ It is proper to state, that this author has been attacked, with severity, by Dr. Hickes, because he makes the institution of juries to be anterior to the conquest.⁸⁹ The assault of this respectable opponent is, however, made feebler by the recollection that lord Coke and Spelman, before Hickes wrote, and bishop Nicholson⁹⁰ since, have maintained, with others, that the Anglo-Saxons had juries.

Some of the cases stated in the Mirror, shew that Alfred was assiduous in protecting the independence, the purity, and the rights of jurymen. He punished capitally some judges for deciding criminal cases by an arbitrary violation of the right of jury.

“ He hanged Cadwine, because he condemned Hachwy to death without the assent of all the jurors, in a case where he put himself upon the jury of twelve men, and because Cadwine removed three who wished to save him against the nine, for three others into whose jury this Hachwy did not put himself.”

“ He hanged Markes, because he adjudged During to death by twelve men not sworn.”

“ He hanged Freberne, because he adjudged Harpin to death when the jurors were in doubt about their verdict; for when in doubt, we ought rather to save than condemn.”⁹¹

His decease.

The numerous actions of this indefatigable king appear sufficient to occupy the longevity of a Nestor. Yet Alfred died at the age of fifty-two; and his life was literally a life of disease. The ficus molested him severely in his childhood.⁹² This, after distressing him many years, disappeared, but at the

⁸⁸ It was printed in London, 1642. A translation appeared in 1646.

⁸⁹ See Hickes's *Dissertatio Epistolaris*, p. 34—43.

⁹⁰ See the bishop's preface to Wilkins's *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae*.

⁹¹ Mirror, p. 296, 297, 298. It was, perhaps, from the regulations which Alfred established in the administration of justice,

that the *Historia Ramesiensis* mentions him with the addition of *Anglicarum legum conditoris*, p. 388. because other kings had made laws before him. Our historians, except Carte, have so little extended their enquiries as not to have looked into the Mirror.

⁹² *Quod genus infestissimi doloris etiam ab infantia habuit.* Asser, 40.

age of twenty was replaced by another of the most tormenting nature. It attacked him, before all the people, suddenly with an immense pain, during his nuptial festivity, and never left him.⁹³ Its seat was internal and invisible;⁹⁴ but its agony was incessant. Such was the dreadful anguish it perpetually produced, that if for one short hour it happened to intermit, the dread and horror of its inevitable return poisoned the little interval of ease.⁹⁵ The skill of his Saxon physicians was unable to detect its nature, or to alleviate its pain. Alfred had to endure it unrelieved.⁹⁶ It is not among the least admirable circumstances of this extraordinary man, that he withstood the fiercest hostilities that ever distressed a nation, cultivated literature, discharged his public duties, and executed all his schemes for the improvement of his people, amid a perpetual agony, so horrible, that would have disabled a common man from the least exertion.

⁹³ Post diuturna die noctuque convivia subito et immensa atque omnibus medicis incognito confestim coram omni populo correptus est dolore. Asser, 40. It was afflicting him in the forty-fifth year of his life, when Asser wrote the paragraph which mentioned it.

⁹⁴ Asser describes it as incognitum enim erat omnibus qui tunc aderant et etiam huc usque quotidie cernentibus, p. 40.

⁹⁵ Sed si aliquando Dei misericordia unius diei aut noctis vel etiam unius horæ intervallo illa infirmitas seposita fuerat, timor tamen ac

tremor illius execrabilis doloris unquam eum non deserit. Asser, 42.

⁹⁶ From this disorder continuing so long with such acute pain, without destroying him sooner; from the period of his life when it began; from its internal situation; from its horrible agony, and from its not appearing to have ceased till his death, some conjecture may be formed of it; at least, I understand, there is one disease incident to the human frame (an internal cancer) to which these circumstances are applicable.

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III.

age of twenty was replaced by another of the most formidable nature. It attacked him, before all the people, suddenly with an immense pain, during his nuptial festivity, and never left him. Its seat was internal and invisible; but its agony was incessant. Such was the dreadful anguish it perpetually produced, that for one short hour it happened to interrupt the thread and horror of its inevitable return poisoned the little interval of ease. The skill of his Saxon physicians was unable to detect its nature, or to alleviate its pain. Afflict had to endure it unrelieved. It is not among the least admirable circumstances of this extraordinary man, that he withstood the fiercest hostilities that ever distressed a nation, cultivated literature, discharged his public duties, and executed all his schemes for the improvement of his people, and a perpetual agony, so horrible, that would have disabled a common man from the least exertion.

From this disorder continuing so long with such acute pain, without decreasing, or even abating, from the period of his life, it began; from its internal situation, from its horrible agony, and from its not applying to have ceased till his death, some copies have been found of it; at least, I understand, there is one preserved in the human library (an internal cancer) to which these circumstances are applicable.

HISTOY

THE HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

BOOK VI.

CHAP. I.

The Reign of Edward the Elder.

ALFRED had been called to the crown in preference to the children of his elder brother. Their pretensions were equally neglected at his death, and Edward, his son, was chosen by the nobles as their king.¹

Ethelwold, one of the disregarded princes, in opposition to the decision of the Anglo-Saxon Witena, attempted to seize the crown for himself.² But when the king advanced with an army against him, he fled to the Northumbrian Danes, and, exciting their sympathy, was appointed their sovereign at York.³

The Northumbrian sovereignty was, however, but a glaring title, generally connected with speedy deposition. Ethelwold

¹ A primatis electus. Ethelwerd. 847. He was crowned at the Whitsuntide after his father's death. Ib.

² Matt. West. 351. At Wimburn, he possessed himself of a nun by force, and married her. Ib. Matthew says, he thought himself not inferior to Edward, either in birth or power. In what his power consisted is not

stated. The Saxon Chronicle, Florence, and the MS. Chronicle, Tib. B. 1. declare, that the movements were contrary to the will of the king, and his witena.

³ Matt. West. 351. Sax. Ch. 100. Flor. 337. The king replaced the nun in her retreat.

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seems to have been but a nominal king; for he was afterwards on the seas a pirate,⁴ and sailed to France in quest of partisans to distress the king.⁵ He returned with his fleet to Essex,⁶ and persuaded the East Anglian Danes to join him; and with them he ravaged Mercia as far as Cricklade. He even passed the Thames, and plundered in Wiltshire; but the Anglo-Saxons not supporting him, he returned. The army of Edward followed him, and ravaged, in retaliation, to the fens of Lincolnshire. When the king withdrew, he directed his army not to separate. The Kentish troops neglected his orders, and remained after the others had retired. Ethelwold eagerly attacked them with superior forces. The Kentish men were overpowered, but their defence was desperate. Their chiefs fell; and the author of the quarrel also perished in his victory.⁷ His fate released the Island from the destructive competition, and a peace, two years afterwards, restored amity between the Anglo-Saxons, and Anglo-Danes.⁸

910.

But war was soon renewed between the rival powers. With his Mercians and West Saxons, Edward, in a five weeks depredation of Northumbria, destroyed and plundered extensively. In the next year, the Northerners returned to Mercia the visit of devastation.⁹ A misconception of the Danes brought them within the reach of the king's sword. While he was tarrying in Kent, he collected one hundred ships, which

⁴ In exilium trusus pirates adduxerat. Malm. 46.

⁵ Matt. West. 351.

⁶ Hunt. 352.

⁷ Sax. Chr. 101. Hunt. 352. Eohric, the Anglo Danish king, fell in the struggle. Ethelwerd places this battle at Holme, 848. Holme in Saxon means a river island. In Lincolnshire there is one called Axelholme. Cand. 474. The printed Saxon Chronicle makes a battle at Holme in 902, besides the battle wherein Ethelwold fell; but the MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. omits the battle in 902. So the MS. Tib. B. 1. With these Florence agrees, and therefore the passage of 902, in

the printed Chronicle, may be deemed a mistake.

⁸ Saxon Chron. Matt. West, adds, that the king immediately afterwards reduced those who had rebelled against him: Et maxime cives Londonienses et Oxonienses, p. 352. In 905, Ealhswythe, the widow of Alfred, died; and her brother, Athulf, an ealdorman, in 903. Sax. Ch. 101. She had founded a monastery of nuns at Winchester. Mailros, 146.

⁹ Sax. Chron. 102. Hunt. 352. The MS. Saxon Chronicles mention, that the English defeated at this time the Danes at Totanheale. Florence and Hoveden place this conflict and place in Staffordshire.

he sent to guard the south-eastern coast,¹⁰ probably to prevent new invasions. The Danes, fancying the great body of his forces to be on the seas, advanced into the country to the Avon, and plundered without apprehension. Edward immediately sent a powerful army to attack them; his orders were obeyed. The Northerns were surprized into a fixed battle at Wodensfield, and were defeated, with the slaughter of many thousands. Two of their kings fell, Halfden and Eowils, the brothers of the celebrated Ingwar, and many earls and officers.¹¹ The Anglo-Saxons sung hymns on their great victory.¹²

The event of this battle established the superiority of Edward over his dangerous neighbours. He pursued the plans which Alfred had devised for the protection of his throne. As the Danes possessed the north of England, from the Humber to the Tweed, and the eastern districts, from the Ouse to the sea, he protected his own frontiers by a line of fortresses. In the places where irruptions into Mercia and Wessex were most practicable, and therefore where a prepared defence was more needed, he built fortifications. He filled these with appointed soldiers, who, when invaders approached, marched out in junction with the provincials to chastise them. No time was lost in waiting for the presence of the king, or of the earls of the county. They were empowered to act of themselves on every emergency, and by this plan of vigilance, energy, and co-operation, the invaders were so easily defeated, that they became a derision to the English soldiery.¹³ In thus fortifying the country, Ethelfleda vigorously joined. She was a widow in 912, but she continued in the sovereignty of Mercia.¹⁴

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¹⁰ Sax. Ch. 102.

¹³ Malmsb. 46.

¹¹ Flor. 340. Ethelw. 848. Sax. Ch. 1103.

¹² Hunt. 353. Many expressions of Ethelwerd have a poetical air in this part, as if he had translated some fragments of these songs.

¹⁴ Sax. Ch. 103. Ethelred, her husband, had been long infirm before his death. Hunt. 353.

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The position of these fortresses demonstrates their utility. Wigmore, in Herefordshire; Bridgnorth and Cherbury, in Shropshire; Edesbury, in Cheshire; and Stafford and Wedesborough, in Staffordshire; were well chosen to coerce the Welsh upon the western limits. Runcorne and Thelwall, in Cheshire, and Bakewell, in Derbyshire, answered the double purpose of awing Wales, and of protecting that part of the north frontier of Mercia from the incursions of the Northumbrian Danes. Manchester, Tamworth in Staffordshire, Leicester, Nottingham, and Warwick, assisted to strengthen Mercia on this northern frontier, and Stamford, Towcester, Bedford, Hartford, Colchester, Witham, and Malden, presented a strong boundary of defence against the hostilities of the East Anglian Danes. The three last cities, placed in a country which Edward's power had extorted, watched three rivers important for their affording an easy debarkation from foreign parts.

918.

The strength of Edward was tried by an invasion of Northmen from Armorica, and his military policy was evidenced by its issue. Two earls led the hostile fleet round Cornwall into the Severn, and devastated North Wales. They debarked and plundered in Herefordshire. The men of Hereford, Gloucester, and the nearest burghs or fortified places, defeated them with the loss of one of their chiefs, and the brother of the other, and drove the rest into a wood, which they besieged. Edward directed armed bodies to watch the Severn, from Cornwall to the Avon. The enemy endeavoured one night to escape in two divisions, but the English overtook them in Somersetshire. One was destroyed in Watchet; the other in Porlock-bay. The miserable remnant sheltered themselves in a neighbouring island, till, tormented by famine, they fled to South-Wales, whence in the autumn they sailed to Ireland.¹⁵

920.

The Anglo-Saxon monarchy received new security from the final incorporation of Mercia with Wessex, on Ethelfleda's death.

¹⁵ Sax. Chron. 105. Flor. 343.

Both Edward and Ethelfleda had many struggles with the Northmen in England; but their triumphs were easy, for they attacked enemies, not in their compact strength, but in their scattered positions. Thus Ethelfleda warred with them in Derby. In assaulting the castle, four of her bravest and most esteemed generals fell, but she still urged the combat, and at last mastered the place: thus she conquered Leicester,¹⁶ and other places.

Edward endured, and perhaps provoked similar conflicts. The Danes attacked his fortress at Towcester, but the garrison and the provincials repulsed them. In Buckinghamshire, the invasion was formidable, and many districts were overrun, till Edward rescued his people by new victories. In some parts they seemed to copy his policy. They built hostile fortresses at Huntingdon, and at Temesford in Bedfordshire; and, proud with the hope of success, they assailed Bedford; but the garrison and its supporters defeating them with slaughter, the dreams of their ambition were dispersed.¹⁷

A peculiar spirit of hostility seemed in the latter years of his reign to have excited the Anglo-Danes; for scarcely had they experienced the defeats already noticed, before another aggression was attempted, and was punished.¹⁸ Before they retrieved their disaster, the king collected a large army from the burghs nearest his object, and attacked his enemies at Temesford. A king, and some earls, perished against him; the survivors were taken, with the city. Pressing on in the path of success, he raised another powerful force from Kent, Surrey, Essex, and their burghs, and stormed and mastered Colchester. The East Anglian Danes marched against Malden, in alliance with some Vikingr, whom they had invited from the seas;¹⁹ but they failed. Edward secured his conquests by

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920.

¹⁶ Hunt. 353. 354, Sax. Chron. 106. Ingulf says of her: "Ipsam etiam urbibus extruendis, castellis muniendis, ac exercitibus ducendis deditam, sexum mutasse putaris," p. 28.

¹⁷ Matt. West. 358. Sax. Chron. 107.

¹⁸ See Sax. Chron. 108, 109.

¹⁹ Gegadrode micel here hine of East Englum, ægther ge thæs land heres, ge thara

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new fortifications; and the submission of many districts augmented his realms, and enfeebled his competitors.²⁰ The East Anglian Danes not only swore to him, "that they would will what he should will,"²¹ and promised immunity to all whom his protection shadowed, but the Danish army at Cambridge separately chose him for their lord and patron.²²

922. These examples of submission spread. When the king was at Stamford, constructing a burgh, all the people, about the north of the river, received his dominion. The Welsh kings obeyed the political emergency. Howel, Cleddauc, and Jeothwell, with their subjects, claimed him as their chief lord,²³ and the king of the Scots chose him for his father and lord. If princes almost beyond the reach of his ambition acquiesced in his superiority, it is not surprizing that the kings of Northumbria and the Strathcluyd population should yield to the impulse.²⁴ After these successes, Edward died at Farrington in Berkshire.²⁵

Edward the elder must be ranked among the founders of the English monarchy. He executed with judicious vigour the military plans of his father; and not only secured the Anglo-Saxons from a Danish sovereignty, but even prepared the way

Wicinga the hie him to fultume aspanen hæfdon. Sax. Chron. 108.

²⁰ Sax. Chron. 109. Thus the king went to Pasham in Northamptonshire, and staid there while a burgh was made at Towcester; then Thurferth Eorl and his followers, and all the army from Northampton to the river Weland in that county, sought him to Hlaforde, and to Mundboran. Ib.

²¹ Tha hie eall tha woldon tha he wolde. Sax. Chron. 109.

²² Hine geceas synderlice him to Hlaforde and to Mundboran. Ib.

²³ Sax. Chron. 110. The Welsh had previously suffered from the warlike Ethelfleda. She took Brecon and a Welsh queen, and signalized herself afterwards in another invasion. Howel was the celebrated Howel Dha, the legislator of Wales. He held both Powys and South Wales. Clydauc was his brother. Wynne's Hist. 44, 45. Powys and Dinefawr

were tributary to the king of Aberfraw. The laws of Howel Dha mention the tribute to the king of London thus: "Sixty-three pounds is the tribute from the king of Aberfraw to the king of London, when he took his kingdom from him; and besides this, except dogs, hawks, and horses, nothing else shall be exacted." L. 3. c. 2. p. 199. Wotton's ed.

²⁴ Mailros, 147. Sax. Ch. 110. Flor. 347. Matt. West. 359. Hoveden, 422. Malmsb. 46. Ingulf, 28. Bromton, 835.

²⁵ The year of his death is differently stated: 924 is given by Matt. West. 359. Bromton 837. Flor. 347. Malmsb. 48. Mail. 147. Chron. Petrib. 25. and by the MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and also B. 4. The printed Saxon Chronicle has 925, p. 110. Hoveden puts 919, and Ethelwerd 926. The authorities for 924 preponderate.

for that destruction of the Anglo Danish power which his descendants achieved.

It has been said of Edward, that he was inferior to his father in letters, but superior to him in war, glory, and power.²⁶ This assertion is rather an oratorical point than an historical fact. Edward had never to struggle with such warfare as that during which Alfred ascended his throne, in which he lost it, and by whose suppression he regained it. Edward encountered but the fragments of that tremendous mass which Alfred first broke.

Edward had many children. He was twice married. His first marriage produced two sons, Ethelward and Edwin, and six daughters. Four of the ladies graced the dignity of continental potentates.²⁷ His second union²⁸ was followed by the birth of two sons, Edmund and Edred, who in the course of time succeeded to his sceptre; and of three daughters, one of whom, a lady of exquisite beauty,²⁹ was wedded to the prince of Aquitain.

An early attachment preceded these happier connections. From the daughter of a shepherd he had Athelstan, his successor, and a daughter. Edward imitated his father as well in his plan of education as in his government. The first part of his daughters' lives was devoted to letters: they were likewise taught to use the needle, and afterwards the distaff. His sons received the best literary education of the day, that they might be well qualified for the offices of government to which they were born.³⁰

²⁶ Malmsb. 46. Flor. 336. Ingulf, 28.

²⁷ Malmsb. 47.

²⁸ His second wife was Æadgifu, whose will is in the collection of the learned Mr. Astle; and is printed in Saxon, with a Latin translation, in the Appendix to Lye's Saxon Dictionary.

²⁹ Edgivam speciositatis eximie mulierem. Malmsb. 47.

³⁰ Malmsb. 47. Edward was for some time under an excommunication from Rome, for keeping his bishoprics vacant. The king appeased the pope by filling seven sees in one day. Malmsb. 48. Edward was buried in the same monastery where his father and brother Ethelwerd lay. Ib.

C H A P. II.

The Reign of Athelstan.

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VI.
Athelstan.

924.

IMMEDIATELY after Edward's interment, Ethelwerd, the eldest son of his first marriage, the pattern of the illustrious Alfred, in manners, countenance, and acquisitions, was taken away from the hopes of his countrymen.¹ On his death, the Anglo-Saxon sceptre was conceded to Athelstan, and he was crowned at Kingston. He was thirty years of age at his accession. His father's will directed the choice of the approving nobles.²

Athelstan was the first born of Edward, but his nativity was illegitimate.³ He had appeared above the horizon, just before Alfred set, and a beam of this irradiating luminary lighted upon him. He could be only six years of age when his grandfather died, and yet, interested by his beauty and manners, Alfred invested him prematurely with the dignity of knighthood, and gave him a purple vestment, a jewelled belt, and a Saxon sword, with a golden sheath. His aunt, Ethelfleda, joined with her husband in superintending his education; and the attainments of Athelstan reflected honour on their attentions.⁴

The Anglo-Saxon sovereign became a character of dignity and consequence in Europe, in the person of Athelstan. His connections with the most respectable personages on the continent, give to his reign a political importance.

¹ Malmsb. 46. Flor. 347. Sax. Ch. 111. Malmsbury says, the prince died in a few days after his father. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tiberius, B. 4. particularizes sixteen days, "sythe brade thær gefor ymbe 16 dagas æt Oxanforda."

² Malmsb. 48, 49.

³ His mother was a shepherd's daughter, of extraordinary beauty. Malmsb. 52. Bromton, 831. Matt. West. 351.

⁴ Malmsb. 49.

Sigtryg, the son of Ivar,⁵ was a reigning king in Northumbria at the accession of Athelstan. He is chiefly known in the Saxon annals, for having murdered his brother;⁶ and in Irish history, for his piratical depredations.⁷ He therefore deserves the character of barbarian, both in mind and in nation.⁸ Athelstan, however, signalized the first years of his government, by committing one of his sisters to his affection. Their marriage was celebrated with magnificence.⁹ Perhaps the circumstance of the king's birth, and the existence of legitimate brethren, disposed him to court the alliance, rather than to encounter the enmity of the Anglo-Danes, while his power was young. Sigtryg embraced Christianity on the occasion; but soon repenting, he put away his wife, and resumed his idolatry.¹⁰ Roused by the insult which must have united the Anglo-Saxons into a determination of revenge, Athelstan armed, but Sigtryg died before he invaded.¹¹ His sons fled before the king; the warlike Anlaf into Ireland, and Godefrid into Scotland.

Athelstan pursued Godefrid; he sent messages to Eugenius, king of the Cumbri, and Constantine, king of the Scots, to demand the fugitives. The Scottish prince obeyed the necessity, and came with homage to England. Godefrid, with a friend, escaped during the journey; and endeavoured, but

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II.

Athelstan.

924.

⁵ He is named the son of Ivar in the Annals of Ulster. See them, p. 65, 66, 67.

⁶ 914. Niel rex occisus est a fratre Sihtrico. Sim. Dun. 133. So Huntingdon, 354. The Annals of Ulster contain a similar incident, which they date in 887, p. 65. They call the brother Godfred. Whether this is a misnomer, or whether Sigtryg perpetrated two fratricides, I cannot decide.

⁷ See the Annals of Ulster.

⁸ So Malmsbury entitles him, gente et animo barbarus, p. 50.

⁹ Hoveden, 422. Flor. 328. Gibson remarks, that in 926, it is said in the Cant. MS. of the Saxon Chronicle, that Athelstan gave his sister—. He says, that something is wanting here, and mentions about Sigtryg. The Cotton MS. fills up the sen-

tence, but not with Sigtryg. It has, "He geaf his sweostor of se Ealdseaxna cynges suna." Tib. B. 4. This same MS. Chronicle supplies us with additional circumstances about Sigtryg's marriage, which I have not seen elsewhere. I mean the place and the day. It says, that the two kings met and concluded the nuptials at Tamworth, on 30th of January, "925, hæf Æthelstan cyning 7 Sihtric Northymbra cyning heo gesamnodon æt Tameweorththige, 3 kal. Februarii 7 Æthelstan his sweostor him forgeaf." MSS. Tib. B. 4.

¹⁰ Matt. West. 360.

¹¹ 926. Sihtricus vita decessit. Flor. 348. The Annals of Ulster express it thus: "926. Sigtryg O'Ivar died in his old age," p. 67.

in vain, to interest York in his favour. Retiring from this city, he was besieged, but again eluded the danger. His friend perished at sea; the prince, after as much misery on the waters as upon land, submitted to Athelstan, and was honourably received at his court. Four days enjoyment satiated him with the charms of civilized life. His early habits impelled him to abandon that tranquillity which is so grateful to the cultured mind, and he fled to maritime piracy.¹²

Athelstan exerted his power with an effect to which Edward's superiority had never reached. He drove Ealdred from Bebbanburgh, demolished the castle at York,¹³ and added Northumbria to his paternal dominions.¹⁴

But Athelstan was not permitted to enjoy his triumph unmolested. A great effort was made against him, which not only threatened to emancipate Northumbria from his authority, but to overwhelm his inherited government. The greatness of the confederacy, and the preparations by which it was supported, excited great attention in Europe, as well as in England. It is narrated in a Northern Saga, as well as in the English Chronicles; and, from a careful comparison of all

¹² Malmsb. 50.

¹³ Malmsb. 50. In Edward's reign Reignwald, a Pagan king, came with a great fleet and conquered York. Two of his leaders are mentioned, Scula, and the cruel Onlafbald, to whom he gave possessions. He drove out Aldred and his brother, and defeated Constantine. Ib. 74. Sim. Dun. 23. This was in 919. Ib. 133. Reignwald had before attacked Dublin. Ib. In 921, he submitted to Edward. Ib. 153. The Annals of Ulster state, in 917, that the Gals, from Ireland, attacked the Scotch, and Northern Saxons, and that Reginald M'Beolach, one of the leaders of the Gals, attacked the Scotch and Saxons in the rear with great slaughter, p. 66.

¹⁴ Matt. West. 360. Flor. 348. The MS. Tib. B. 4. gives a passage in Saxon not in the printed Chronicle, but of the same import with the Latin of Florence, ad an. 926. On comparing the two MS. Chronicles of

Tib. B. 1. and Tib. B. 4. I find that they contain in several places passages which are no where else preserved, but in Florence, or Matthew of Westminster, Hoveden, or in Huntingdon. The Annals of these writers are therefore, perhaps, but Latin translations of Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. I think, if all the MS. Anglo-Saxon Chronicles were collated with Dr. Gibson's printed edition; and if to these were added the other historical fragments which yet exist in the Saxon language, it would be found, that the Latin narrations of all our chroniclers, of the events preceding the conquest, are in general translations or abridgements from the Anglo-Saxon documents of our ancestors. At least the existence of similar passages, yet in Anglo-Saxon, is one of the best proofs which we can obtain of this curious fact. It is curious, because, wherever it obtains, it gives to the whole series of our ancient annals the force of contemporary evidence.

the documents, the following facts seem to be an authentic detail.

In 934, Athelstan had ravaged Scotland with his army, as far as Dunfoeder, and Wertmore, while his fleet spread dismay to Caithness.¹⁵ Constantine was then unable to withstand the storm, but he prepared for a day of vengeance. Anlaf also, the son of Sigtryg, or Sihtric, though he had obtained a sovereignty in Ireland, was planning to retaliate the insult of his expulsion from Northumbria. In Wales, the princes, humbled by Athelstan,¹⁶ were ready to co-operate for the abasement of his power. The Anglo-Danes (as, for convenience and dispatch, we will hereafter term the descendants of the Northern colonists of Northumbria and East Anglia) beheld with displeasure the preponderance of the Saxon sovereign, and the petty state of Cumbria had no choice but to follow the impulse of the potent neighbours who surrounded it. All these powers confederated¹⁷ against Athelstan, and the united mass of their hostilities was augmented by fleets of warriors from Norway and the Baltic.¹⁸ By an attack of this magnitude, it seemed a certain calculation that the single force of Athelstan must be overthrown.

The combination of so much hostility could not be completed, and the armaments, necessary for its successful

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

934.

¹⁵ Mailros, 147. Sax. Chron. 111. Sim. Dun. 134. The cause of the invasion was Constantine's violation of his treaty. The Scottish king gave up his son as a hostage, with many presents. Sax. Chron. 349.

¹⁶ Florence mentions the prior subjection of Huwal, king of the West-Britons, and Wer, the king of Gwent, in 926, p. 348. Matt. West. names these princes Hunwal, and Wlferth, p. 360.

¹⁷ The members of the confederacy are stated from Ingulf, 29, 37. Flor. Wig. 349. Sax. Chron. 111—114. Hoveden, 422; and the Egilli-Saga, in Johnstone's Celto Scandicæ, p. 31. Florence, Alured Bey. and Hoveden, say, that Constantine incited Anlaf to the attempt.

¹⁸ The British Chronicle in the Cotton Library, MS. Cleopatra, B. 5. says, "Ac

ý doeth gwyr Denmarc ý geisiaw goresgyn ýr ýnys ý arnaw." 'And the men of Denmark came who sought to conquer the island from him.' It adds, "Ac ý rodes ýnter kyffranc ýdunt ac yny kýffranc hwnnw ýllas brenhin yr yscottieit, phýmp brenhin o Denmarc." 'And he gave them battle, and in this battle were slain the king of Scotland, and five kings of Denmark.' This chronicle ends near the year 1200. The Saxon song mentions Northmanna to have been in the battle. "Thær geflemed wearth Northmanna bregu," p. 113. The Annals of Ulster calls the struggle, "a great and destructive war between the Saxons and Normans," p. 67. So Hunt. mentions Froda as ductor Normannus, p. 354. Ingulf mentions Danorum and Norreganorum, 37.

explosion, could not be collected, without Athelstan's knowledge.

He prepared to meet the storm with firmness and energy; and, to multiply his own means of defence, he circulated promises of high reward to every warrior who should join his standard.¹⁹

Thorolf and Egil, two of those navigating vikingr whose weapons were ready for any enterprize, heard the tidings as they sailed by Saxony and Flanders. They came in the autumn with three hundred companions, to proffer their services to Athelstan, who gladly received them.²⁰ His other allies are not stated.

Anlaf invades.

Anlaf²¹ commenced the warfare, by entering the Humber with a fleet of 615 ships.²² When the confederates had all joined, the moving hostility must have been formidable. The governors, whom Athelstan had left in Northumbria, are named Alfgeirr, and Gudrekr. Their forces were soon overpowered. Gudrekr fell, and Alfgeirr fled to his sovereign with the tidings.²³ Among the allies of Anlaf, the Northern Saga names Hryngr, and Adils, as British princes. The latter may perhaps have been Edwal, the son of Anarawd, who was reigning in North Wales at this period;²⁴ but it is probable, that Hryngr was a Danish leader.²⁵

¹⁹ Adalsteinn autem copias sibi contraxit, præbuitque stipendia omnibus, exteris et indigenis, qui hoc pacto rem facere cupiebant. Egilli Skallagrimí Saga, p. 31.

²⁰ Egilli Saga, p. 31, 32. They are called Vikingum in p. 43.

²¹ In the Egilli Saga, he is called Olafr. In the Annals of Ulster, Olave, p. 67. In the Brut Jean Breckfa, Awlaff, p. 485. In Bromton, Aulaf. Other English Chronicles call him Anlaf, Anlavus, Analaph, and Onlaf.

²² Mailros, 147. and Sim. Dun. 25. Hoveden, 422. The ship in which Egil afterwards left England, contained one hundred men or more. Egil Saga, p. 55. If Anlaf's ships were of this size, his army must have been sixty thousand. We may take thirty thousand as a safer average.

²³ Egilli Saga, 33, 34.

²⁴ Eidwal Foel acceded in 913, on the death of Anarawd. Brut y Tywys, p. 485. He fell against the Saxons in 941. MS. Cleop. 5.

²⁵ There is an Icelandic fragment which expressly states, that Harald Blaatand, or Blue Tooth, sent his son Hryngr with an army to England; but that Hryngr there, dolo circumventus et occisus est. 1 Langb. 149. Now as the old Icelandic Annals (1 Langb. 187), place the accession of Harald in 907, and as he was reigning at the time of this battle, I think it highly probable, that Hryngr, the son of Harald, was the opponent of Athelstan. Langbeck wants to make this son of Harald, the Eric who will be mentioned in the reign of Edred; but that Eric was unquestionably the son of Harald Harfragre.

The Northern account states, that the first array collected by the friends of Athelstan, being unequal to a contest, pretended negotiations, and fictitious offers of money, were made by the Anglo-Saxons, to gain time till all their army could be assembled.²⁶ When their preparations were complete, Athelstan closed the intercourse by a message to Anlaf,† that he should have permission to withdraw from England unmolested, if he restored his plunder, and would acknowledge himself the subject of the Saxon king.

The messengers reached Anlaf's camp at night; he arose from his bed, and assembled his earls. The tidings were added, that Athelstan had that day marched into the city a powerful host. The Welsh prince exclaimed, that the negotiations had been mere artifice; and proposed, that he and Hryngr should attempt a night attack on the advanced part of Athelstan's army, commanded by Alfgeirr, and Thorolf.²⁷

Anlaf, brave and active, resolved to inspect the army before he attempted the surprize, that the blow might be directed to the most important quarter. He put off his regal vestments, and concealing himself under the disguise of a harper, he went singing through the Saxon army, till he reached the royal tent. His music and dancing gratified Athelstan, till the business of the camp demanded his presence. The minstrel was then dismissed with presents, but his pride revolted against accepting a gift from Athelstan. He took it to avoid detection, but he disdained to keep it, and he buried it in the sand as he left the encampment.

A soldier in the outer stations observed his movements, and knew him in his disguise. He did not betray him; but, with discerning loyalty, he hastened with the tidings to Athelstan. To a rebuke for not having seized him, he answered, "O king, the oath which I have lately taken to you, I once gave to Anlaf.

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.

934.

Visits Athelstan's camp.

Discovered.

²⁶ Egilli Saga, 38, 39.

²⁷ Egilli Saga, 40, 42.

† The Saga says, Adils, but the meaning seems to imply Anlaf.

If I had broken it to him, I might have been faithless to you; but deign to hear a servant's counsel, and remove your tent to another quarter." Athelstan thought the advice sagacious, and the royal residence was placed in a distant part. The bishop of Sherborne soon afterwards arriving with his soldiers, was lodged in the plain which the king had quitted.²⁸

Night attack.

At night Adils and Hryngr embodied their forces, and marched on the Saxon camp. The bishop was the victim of the surprize.²⁹ But Thorolf and Alfgeirr, who commanded in the district, roused their warriors, and supported the attack. Adils assaulted the division of Alfgeirr, and Hryngr directed himself to the allied vikingr.

Vanquished by the impetuosity of his assailant, Alfgeirr fled from the field, and eventually the country. Adils, flushed with his victory, turned on the others. Thorolf directed his colleague, Egils, to meet him; he exhorted his troops to stand close, and if overpowered to retreat to the wood. Egils obeyed, though with a force inferior.

The battle became warm. Thorolf fought with all the fury of valour, which was the pride of the day; he threw his shield behind him, and, grasping his huge weapon with both hands,³⁰ he prostrated the enemies with an irresistible strength. He forced his way at last to the standard of his adversary; he reached; he killed him. His success animated his followers, and Adils, mourning the death of Hryngr, at last gave way, and the combat discontinued.³¹

Athelstan, hearing of this affair, united, and arranged all his forces for a decisive engagement. Anlaf did the same. A

²⁸ Malmsb. 48, and 248.

²⁹ Ingulf, 37. Malmsb. 48, 248.

³⁰ The sword wielded with both hands, was used by the ancient natives of the Hebrides. They called it the glaymore, the great sword. See Boswell's Tour, p. 210, 230. It was a weapon of most barbarous nations.

³¹ Egil's Saga, 44, 45. I do not give the whole detail of the Saga; I select the circumstances which are most entitled to notice, and which harmonize best with the

Saxon descriptions. No two nations describe the same particulars of a battle, although the narration of each is intended to be authentic. A great battle is composed of a multiplicity of incidents. Individuals, in different stations of the field, notice different circumstances. The Saga is minute about the part where Thorolf and Egils fought. The Saxons neglect these warriors, to record their Turketul and Athelstan. This is natural and allowable, perhaps inevitable.

night of rest preceded the awful conflict. Athelstan formed his array of battle. In the front he placed his bravest troops, with Egils at their head. He let Thorolf head his own band, with an addition of Anglo-Saxons, to oppose the irregular Irish, who always flew from point to point; no where steady, yet often injuring the unguarded.³² The warriors of Mercia and London, who were conducted by the valiant Turketul, the chancellor of the kingdom, he directed to oppose themselves to the national force of Constantine. He chose his own West-Saxons to endure the struggle with Anlaf, his competitor.³³ Anlaf observing his disposition, in part imitated it. He obeyed the impulse of his hopes and his courage, and placed himself against Athelstan. One of his wings stretched to the wood against the battalia of Thorolf; it was very numerous, and consisted of the disorderly Irish.³⁴

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

934.

The main battle

Brunanburh³⁵ was the scene of action; and Thorolf began the battle he loved; he rushed forward to the wood, hoping to turn the enemy's flank; his courage was too impetuous and indiscriminate; his eagerness for the fray impelled him beyond his companions. They were pressing fiercely and blindly onward, when Adils darted from his ambush in the wood, and overwhelmed Thorolf and his friends with destruction. Egils heard the outcries of alarm; he looked to that quarter, and saw the banner of Thorolf retreating. Satisfied from this circumstance that Thorolf was not with it, he flew to the spot, encouraged his party, renewed the battle, and sacrificed Adils to the manes of Thorolf.³⁶

at Brunanburh.

At this crisis, while the conflict was raging with all the

³² Egil's Saga, 46, 47.

³³ Ingulf, 37.

³⁴ Egil's Saga, 47.

³⁵ It is singular that the position of this famous battle is not ascertained. The Saxon song says, it was at Brunanburh; Ethelwerd, a contemporary, names the place Brunandune; Simeon of Durham, Weondune or Ethrunnanwerch, or Brunnan byrge;

Malmsbury, Brunsford; Ingulf says, Brunsford in Northumbria. These, of course, imply the same place: but where was it? Camden thought it was at Ford, near Bromeridge, in Northumberland. Gibson mentions, that in Cheshire there is a place called Brunburh. I observe that the Villare mentions a Brunton in Northumberland.

³⁶ Egil's Sag. 48, 49.

obstinacy of determined patriotism and desperate ambition; when missile weapons had been mutually abandoned; when foot was planted against foot, shield forced against shield, and manual vigour was exerting with every energy of destruction; when chiefs and vassals were perishing in the all-levelling confusion of war,³⁷ and the ranks mowed down were fiercely supplied with new crowds of warriors hastening to become victims, the chancellor Turketul made an attack which influenced the fortune of the day. He selected from the combatants some citizens of London, with whose veteran valour he was familiar: to these he added the men of Worcestershire, and their leader, the magnanimous Singin. He formed those chosen troops into a firm and compact body, and placing his vast muscular figure at their head, he chose a peculiar quarter of attack, and rushed impetuously on his prey.

The hostile ranks fell before him. He pierced the circle of the Picts and the Orkneymen, and, heedless of the wood of arrows and spears which fastened in his armour, he even penetrated to the Cumbrians and the Scots. He beheld Constantine, the king of the Grampian hills, and he waded through the gory torrents to assail him. Constantine was too brave to decline his daring adversary. The assault fell first upon his son, who was unhorsed; with renovated fury the battle then began to rage. Every heart beat vehement; every arm was impatient to rescue or to take the prince. The Scots, with noble loyalty, precipitated themselves on the Saxons, to preserve their leader. Turketul would not forego the glorious prize. Such, however, was the fury of his assailants; so many weapons surrounded the Saxon chancellor, that his life began to be endangered, and he repented of his daring. He was nearly oppressed; the prince was just re-

³⁷ Cessantibus cito ferentariis armis, pede pes, et cuspide cuspis umbo que umbone pellebatur. Cæsi multi mortales, confusa que

cadavera regum et pauperum corruebant. Ingulf, 37.

leased; when Singin, with a desperate blow, terminated the contested life. New courage rushed into the bosoms of the Saxons on this event. Grief and panic as suddenly overwhelmed their enemies. The Scots in consternation withdrew, and Turketul triumphed in his hard-earned victory.³⁸

Athelstan and his brother Edmund³⁹ were, during these events, engaged with Anlaf. In the hottest season of the conflict, the sword of Athelstan broke at the handle, while his enemies were pressing fiercely upon him. He was speedily supplied with another,⁴⁰ and the conflict continued to be balanced.

After the battle had long raged, Egils and Turketul, pursuing the retreating Scots, charged suddenly upon Anlaf's rear. It was then that his determined bands began to be shaken;⁴¹ slaughter thinned their ranks; many fled, and the assailants cried out "Victory." Athelstan exhorted his men to profit by the auspicious moment. He commanded his banner to be carried into the midst of the enemy. He made a deep impression on their front, and a general ruin followed. The soldiers of Anlaf fled on every side, and the death of pursuit filled the plain with their bodies.⁴²

Thus terminated this dangerous and important conflict. Its successful issue was of such consequence, that it raised Athelstan to a most venerated dignity in the eyes of all Europe. The kings of the continent sought his friendship,⁴³ and England began to assume a majestic port amid the other

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Athelstan.

934.

³⁸ Ingulf, 37. Malmsbury and Ingulf, and the Welsh Chronicle, Cleop. A. 5. (ý llas brenhin yr yscottieit) assert, that Constantine fell; but I think the Saxon poem a better, because a contemporary evidence, that it was his son that perished. This says of Constantine, 7 his sunu forlet on wæl stole, wundum forgrunden geonge æt guthe, p. 113. The Scottish history confirms the escape of Constantine.

³⁹ The Saxon song attests the presence of Edmund in the battle, p. 112.

⁴⁰ This incident was thought of consequence enough to be dignified by a miracle,

which the prayers of Odo produced. See his life by Osberne; and see Bromton, p. 839, 863.

⁴¹ Egilli Saga, 49.

⁴² Egilli Saga, 50. Ingulf, 37.

⁴³ Hac itaque victoria per universam Christianitatem citius ventilata, desiderabant omnes reges terræ cum Athelstano rege amicitias facere et quocumque modo sacra fœdera pacis inire. Ingulf, 37. Ethelwerd, who ends his chronicle with Eadgar, says, that, to his day, it was popularly called the great battle, p. 848.

BOOK
VI.
Athelstan.
934.

nations of the West. Among the Anglo-Saxons it excited such rejoicings, that not only their poets aspired to commemorate it, but the songs were so popular, that one of them is inserted in the Saxon Chronicle, as the best memorial of the event.⁴⁴

It celebrates both Athelstan and Edmund, the nobles, and the valour of the West Saxons and Mercians; it states the battle to have lasted from sun-rise to sun-set; it mentions the death of five kings; the flight of Anlaf, and the fall of seven of his earls; the flight of Froda; the retreat of Constantine, and the death of his son: it concludes with declaring, that the books of the old writers had never mentioned a greater slaughter in this island "since the Angles and the Saxons hither came from the East over the broad ocean, and sought Britain; when the illustrious war-smiths overcame the Welsh; when the earls, excelling in honour, obtained the country."⁴⁵

Athelstan
first monarch
of England.

Northumbria and Wales⁴⁶ fell into the power of Athelstan, by this victory. It effectually secured to him the throne of his ancestors; and the subjugation of the Anglo-Danes was so decisive, that he has received the fame of being the founder of the English monarchy.

The claims of Egbert to this honour are unquestionably surreptitious. The competition can only be between Alfred

⁴⁴ Sax. Chron. p. 112—114. The song is also in the two MSS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. with frequent variations in orthography from the printed copy. The MS. B. 1. puts it to the year 937; and, among other readings, instead of 7 heora land, p. 113. l. 30. has eft Yraland. So the MS. B. 4. instead of bord-weal, p. 112. l. 12. has heord weal: for ealgodon, afterwards, gealgoden, and many similar differences, which are worth collating, because in some instances, as in Yraland and heord weal, they improve the sense. Langbeck has published it, with notes, and with three versions, v. 2. p. 412. Henry of Huntingdon has inserted an ancient Latin version of it in his history, p. 354. Malmsbury has preserved a portion of another poem, written also on this occasion, p. 51, 52.

⁴⁵ Sax. Chron. 114. The ancient supple-

ment to Snorre Sturleson says, "Angli hoc prælium unum censuerunt inter maxima et acerrima quæ unquam cum Normannis aut Danis commiserunt." 2 Langb. 419.

⁴⁶ Ac ef a ýstyngawd ýdaw holl brenhined Kymre ac aberys ydunt talu teyrnget ydaw megys ý talawd brenhin Nortwei ýdaw. Sef oed hýnný trý chant punt o areant ac ngaent punt o cun a phymp mil gwarthee pob blwýdyn. MS. of British History, Cleop. B. 5. "And he became possessed of all the kingdom of Wales, and it was made to pay a tribute to him like the payment of the king of Norway to him. This was 300 pounds of silver, and 100 pounds of wool, and 5,000 cows every year." Caradoc gives this tribute somewhat different. He says, "20 pounds in gold, 300 in silver, and 200 head of cattle." Wynne, 48.

and Athelstan. Our old chronicles vary on this subject: some denominate Alfred the first monarcha;⁴⁷ some give it to Athelstan.⁴⁸ The truth seems to be, that Alfred was the first monarch of the Anglo-Saxons, but Athelstan was the first monarch of England. The Danish sovereigns, to whose colonies Alfred chose or was compelled to yield Northumbria and East Anglia, divided the island with him; therefore, though he first reigned monarch over the Anglo-Saxons, from the utter destruction of the octarchy, it was not until Athelstan completely subjugated the Anglo-Danish power, that the monarchy of England arose. After the battle of Brunanburh, Athelstan had no competitor: he was the immediate sovereign of all England. He was even nominal Lord of Wales and Scotland.

The fame of Athelstan extended beyond the island he governed. His accomplishments, his talents, and his successes, interested Europe in his favour, and he received many proofs of the respect with which foreigners regarded him. He had connections with Bretagne, France, Germany, Norway, and Normandy; and from this period England began to lose its insular seclusion, and to be concerned with the current transactions of Europe.

When the Northmen, who had settled in Normandy, over-

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

934.

⁴⁷ Matt. West. 340. So the *Chronicon de regibus Angliæ* a Petro de Ickham. MS. Cotton Lib. Domit. A. 3. *Primus regum Anglorum super totam Angliam solus regnare cepit*—So the *Chronicon Johannis de Taxton*, ab initio mundi ad Ed. I. MS. Cotton, Julius, A. 1. *Alfredus exinde regnum Anglorum solus omnium regem obtinuit*—So *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes monachi S. Benedicti de Hulmo ab adventu Saxonum ad A.D. 1293*. MS. Cotton, Nero, D. 2. *ad regem Aluredum primum monarcham totius Angliæ*—So a MS. in the same volume, p. 243. *Aluredus rex qui primus totum regnum Angliæ possedit*—So the *Chronicon Roffense*, ib. p. 79. *Iste Alfredus primus monarcha fuit regni Angliæ*; and many others.

⁴⁸ Edgar, in one of his charters, says of

Athelstan, "*Qui primus regum Anglorum omnes nationes qui Britanniam incolunt sibi armis subegit*," 1 Dugdale Monast. 140. and see Alured. Beverl. 110. Sim. Dunelm, p. 18 and 24. Stubb's *Acta Pont. Ebor.* 1698. So the *Compendium Hist. de regibus, Anglo-Saxon* MS. Cott. Domit. A. 8. p. 5. *Athelstanus qui primus regum ex Anglis totius Britanniae monarchiam habuit*—So the *Chronica of Tewksbury*, MS. Cleop. C. 3. and cited in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, v. 1. p. 154. has, "*Adelstani regis qui primus monarcha fuit*."—So the *Historia Ramesiensis*, 3 Gall. 387. calls him *Æthelstani totius olim Angliæ Basilei*.—Hermannus, who wrote 1070, says, *Ædelstanus regnat Angliam que diu partitam solus sibi subjugat*. MS. Tib. B. 2. p. 22.

BOOK
VI.
Athelstan.

His connec-
tions with
Bretagne;

ran Bretagne, the sovereign, Mathuedoi, escaped to England with his family. The Breton lords followed; and all who preferred honourable poverty to the loss of liberty, swelled the emigration. Athelstan received the wretched exiles, who came to him under the same circumstances as those in which their ancestors had fled to Bretagne, with that humanity which ennobles the benefactor.

The young Alan, the son of Mathuedoi, by the daughter of the celebrated Alain, he took into his palace, and was the sponsor at his baptism. Nourished and educated by Athelstan's liberality, the young Alan grew up to manhood with ability and honour. He beheld indignantly the sufferings of his country; he panted for the day of retribution. As soon as his age would permit, he assembled the surviving Bretons who had emigrated, and directed his course to the shores of Bretagne. He surprized Dol and St. Brieux. His appearance and first successes revived both patriotism and hope; he was numerously joined; he drove the Northmen from his country and from the Loire, and received the sceptre of Bretagne as his well-merited reward.⁴⁹

and with
France.

When Charles the Simple, the king of France, was imprisoned and dethroned, his queen, Edgiva, fled into England to her father Edward the elder, carrying over her son Louis, but three years old.⁵⁰

The queen and her son continued the guests of Athelstan, who treated his unfortunate sister with affection and respect.

Rodolf, a Frankish noble, who had assumed the throne of Charles, governed France, full of seditions, revolts, and hostilities, with those talents which give celebrity to their

⁴⁹ Chronicon Namnetense restitutum, in the appendix to Lobineau, v. 2. p. 45. and in Bouquet, 8. p. 276. and Flodoard Chron. ib. Such was the desolation which had attended the Northman invasion, that the civitas Namnetica sine ullo habitatore vacua et omnino longo tempore deserta remansit. Ib. Of Alanus, the Chronicon says, "fuit

vir potens ac valde adversus inimicos suos belligerator fortis habens et possidens omnem Britanniam, fugatis inde Normannis, sibi subditam et Redonicam et Namneticum et etiam trans Ligerim Medalgicum, Theofalgicum et Herbadillicum." 8 Bouquet, 276.

⁵⁰ Daniel, 236.

possessor, and happiness to the people.⁵¹ In 926, an intercourse was opened with Athelstan by Hugues the son of Robert, whose dignity had been so fleeting. Hugues requested of Athelstan, his sister, Ethilda, in marriage. This was a very delicate negociation. Hugues had co-operated with the other chiefs, who had dethroned and still kept imprisoned the king, who had married the sister of the lady he wooed. This sister was with Athelstan, with her infant child. Hugues, however, persevered in his suit, and conducted it with dexterity. He obtained for his ambassador, Adulf, the son of the count of Flanders, and of Alfred's daughter, the aunt of Athelstan.⁵² The affinity of Adulf must have given interest to his negociation. Splendid presents enforced the request; perfumes never seen in England before; emeralds of fascinating verdure; many fine coursers with rich caparisons; a vase of onyx, so beautifully carved, that the corn, vines, and men seemed animated, and so polished, that it reflected like a mirror; the sword of Constantine the Great; the conquering lance of Charlemagne; a diadem of gold and gems, so radiant as to dazzle; and some venerated relicks, composed the splendid gift.⁵³ Policy, perhaps, taught the importance, even to the dethroned Charles, or to his family, of making Hugues a friend. His wishes were therefore gratified, and he became the brother-in-law of Athelstan.⁵⁴

When Rodolf died without male issue, the competition for the crown was renewed between Hugues and Vermandois. Their factions were too equally balanced to admit

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

926.

936.

⁵¹ His successful wars, the humiliation of the vassals of the crown, thirteen years possession of an usurped throne, and la France pacifiée malgré tant d'esprits inquiets, sont des preuves tres certaines de sa prudence, de son courage, de sa fermeté et de ce genie superieur qui fait les grands hommes et les heros. Daniel, 250.

⁵² Malmsbury, 51. The British Chronicle, Cleop. B. 5. mentions this: "Ac y daeth

Edulf iarll Boloyn ap Baudewine iarll Flandrys ac aurec gan Hugues."

⁵³ The presents are enumerated by Malmsbury, p. 51. who says, "Equos plurimos." The British Chronicle specifies, but with apparent amplification, 'Try chant emmys ac eu gwisgoed,' "three hundred coursers with their trappings." MSS. Cleop. B. 5.

⁵⁴ Athelstan returned the courtesy with non minoribus beneficiis, in addition to the lady. Malmsb. 51.

BOOK

VI.

Athelstan.

936.

Louis quits
England.Louis allies
with Athel-
stan.

either to reign. Some persons, remembering the family of Charles, proposed the election of his son. Hugues, despairing of his own elevation, inclined to this idea. Athelstan, understanding the circumstances, exerted himself in behalf of Louis, the young prince, who was still at his court. He sent an embassy to the duke of Normandy,⁵⁵ to engage his influence with the Frankish lords, who at last resolved to send to England to offer the crown to Louis.⁵⁶

The deputies, one of whom was the archbishop of Sens, reached England in 936, and supplicated Athelstan, on the part of the states of France, to permit their chosen king to join them. Athelstan had the glory of receiving this address, and of expressing, in return, his joy at the event, and his anxiety for the safety of the young prince. The French ambassadors plighted their oaths, and saluted him king. Athelstan allowed him to depart a few days afterwards, and sent many Anglo-Saxon bishops and lords to accompany him in honour. Hugues and the nobles of France received him at Boulogne, and he was crowned at Laon.⁵⁷

The reign of Louis was not attended with the friendship of Hugues. Differences, in time, arose, and Hugues increased his consequence by marrying Hadwida, the daughter of Henry the First, emperor of Germany.⁵⁸ Louis, to collect a power capable of securing himself against the aspiring nobles, procured the alliance of Athelstan, who promised to send a fleet to his succour. "This is the first example," says a modern French historian, "which we have in our history, not only of an offensive league between France and England, but it is also the first treaty by which these two kingdoms concerned themselves about each other's welfare. Until this event, the

⁵⁵ Dudo de Act. Norman. l. 3. p. 97.

⁵⁶ Hugo comes trans mare mittit pro accersendo Ludovico Caroli filio quem rex Alstannus avunculus ipsius nutriebat. Flodoardi Hist. Eccles. Rhem. l. 4. c. 26.

⁵⁷ Flodoardi, ib. Louis, from his residence

in England, was surnamed Transmarinus, or Outremer.

⁵⁸ Chronicon Flodoardi, 8 Bouquet, 184. By her he had Hugh Capet, who completed the deposition of the family of Charlemagne, which his ancestors had begun, and whose dynasty has been still more violently terminated in our days.

two nations had considered themselves as two worlds, which had no connection but that of commerce to maintain, and had no interest to cultivate either friendship or enmity in other concerns."⁵⁹

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
939.

Athelstan performed his engagements. When Otho passed the Rhine in 939, Louis claimed of England the stipulated aid. The Anglo-Saxon fleet sailed immediately for his support. It appeared off the coast of Flanders, and protected the maritime cities: it ravaged some territories of the enemy, but returned to England without having had the opportunity of any important achievement.⁶⁰

Athelstan
aids Louis
with a fleet.

So much was Athelstan considered abroad, that Arnulf, the count of Flanders, having taken the fortress of the count Herluin, in 939, sent his captive wife and children to Athelstan.⁶¹

The Emperor of Germany, Henry the First, permitted his son, Otho, afterwards surnamed the Great, to solicit a sister of Athelstan in marriage.

His connection with the
Emperor
Henry I.

In 919, the dignity of Emperor was conferred on the prince nominated by Conrad, who has become illustriously known to posterity under the title of Henry the First, or the Fowler.

919.

The wars of Henry with the barbarous nations of Hungary, with the Danes, Bavarians, Suabians, Bohemians, Vandals, Dalmatians, and Franks, by their successful issue, produced to him a high reputation, and gave new dignity and power to the Imperial crown; but his mind soared above the praise of a barbarous conqueror. Such characters have a thousand rivals. The catalogue of men, whose successful courage or tactical management has decided fields of battle in their favour, is as extensive as time itself. Wars have every where deformed the world, and conquerors may of course every where be found. It is for those who display a cultured

⁵⁹ Daniel, p. 256.

⁶⁰ Chronicon Flodoardi. 8 Bouquet, 193.

⁶¹ Ib. 192.

intellect and useful virtues; whose lives have added something to the stock of human happiness; and whose characters therefore present to us the visions of true greatness, that history must reserve its frugal panegyrics: Henry the Fowler was one of these most fortunate personages. He found his German subjects wedded to their barbarism by their agricultural and pastoral habits; and while he provided for their safety he laboured to improve both their morals and their mind.⁶²

He determined, for this purpose, to draw the population of Germany from their rude, unsocial, and exposed villages, into towns;⁶³ into those happy approximations of society which present a barrier to the sword of war, which are the nurseries of the middle orders of men, which tame the ferocities of the human passions, give dominion to moral sympathy, communicate cultivation and knowledge by perpetual contagion, and cause the virtues to blossom amid general emulation, by daily lessons of their necessity, their diffusion, and their fame. These towns he fortified with skilful labour.⁶⁴

To effect his purpose, he commanded, that of the men in the villages who bore arms, a ninth should be placed in towns, for whose benefit the rest should cultivate the labours of husbandry. The townsmen were to receive a third of the collected harvest; and, in return, they built barns and habitations within the city, for the peasants. When war summoned, the burghers hastened to the defence of their country. By this institution the ravages of enemies never introduced famine, because the granaries in the cities were an ultimate

⁶² Conrad seems to have foreseen this disposition in Henry, for it is his reason for selecting the Saxon duke: "*Sunt nobis, frater, copiae exercitus congregandi atque ducendi, sunt urbes et arma cum regalibus insigniis et omne quod decus regium deposcit, præter fortunam atque mores. Fortuna, frater, cum nobilissimis moribus, Henrico cedit.*" Wittichind, p. 10.

⁶³ "Before this period, excepting the castles on the mountains, the seats of the

nobility and convents, which happened to be surrounded with walls, there were only lonely farms and villages." Pütter's Historical Developement, 1. p. 114.

⁶⁴ "In this respect Germany has undergone but little alteration. Most of the ancient cities, and even inconsiderable towns, are surrounded with walls, towers, &c. which give them a singular and dismal appearance." Pütter, ed. note, p. 115.

supply, and warriors were always ready to fly to the field when exigency called.⁶⁵

To induce the people to make towns their voluntary residence, he forbade suburbs, and ordered that the country habitations should be few and mean. He ordered all solemn meetings, the festivities of marriage, and the traffic of merchandize, to be held in towns; he directed the citizens to improve themselves by useful industry, and, in peace, to learn those arts which they might practice to their benefit.⁶⁶

By his regulations, by his personal diligence, and by their own beneficial experience, the Germans gradually laid aside their aversion to live in towns, and these important seminaries of human improvement perpetually increased.⁶⁷

Henry, during his life, extended his communications to England; and, in 932, by his permission, Otho sought a wife from the sisters of Athelstan.

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.

932.

Otho marries
Athelstan's
sister.

Editha was residing in her brother Athelstan's court, when the ambassadors of Henry arrived, to request her for his son. Athelstan received them benignly, his sister⁶⁸ assented, and a magnificent attendance, which his chancellor, Turketul, headed,⁶⁹ conducted her to her royal lover. Her sister Adiva went with her, that Otho might be more honoured, and might take his choice.⁷⁰ Editha was preferred by the too highly honoured Otho, and her sister was married to a prince near the Alps, who was one of the emperor's court.⁷¹

⁶⁵ See the Instituta of Henry apud Goldastum, sub. Anno 924. I find them cited in the Aquila Saxonica, p. 24. ed. Venet. 1673. Wittichind mentions them briefly, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Instituta Henrici in Aquila Sax. p. 24. The latter precept is enforced by a moral observation: "Disciplina enim et labor magnum ad virtutem afferunt momentum." Ib.

⁶⁷ Soest, in Westphalia, is probably one of the first cities founded by Henry. Next

to this town, the most ancient are supposed to be Quedlinburg, Nordhausen, Duderstadt, Merseberg, &c. Pütter, note 117.

⁶⁸ Hrosvida. Poem de gestis Oddonis, p. 165. She calls our island, *terram sat deliciosam*.

⁶⁹ Ingulf, p. 38.

⁷⁰ Hrosvida, p. 165.

⁷¹ Ethelwerd's preface. Ingulf, 38. and Malmsb. 47. Hrosvida mourns the death of Editha with great expressions of sorrow, p. 171.

BOOK
VI.
Athelstan.
Athelstan's
transactions
with Norway.

It will not be uninteresting to review Athelstan's transactions with Norway.

In the reign of Edward, and at the accession of Athelstan, Harald Harfragre was reigning the monarch of Norway. He had subdued all the little kings, who had divided it into many small states, and his victories had never been reversed.

Harald, though a barbarian, was not merely the brutal soldier. The spirit of improvement, which at this period influenced an Alfred and a Henry, seems to have been communicated to him. He also aspired to legislate as well as to conquer.⁷² He endeavoured to civilize the countries he subdued.

The wars of Harald, though inevitably productive of much individual misery, have the great excuse, that defence first compelled him into the martial field.⁷³ In a general view, his conquests had a beneficial effect. They dispersed several portions of the Norwegian population into countries then uninhabited. Thus Iceland,⁷⁴ the Orkneys,⁷⁵ the Shetland, and the Feroe islands,⁷⁶ date their habitation in his reign, as well as Jamtia and Helsingia, provinces of Sweden.⁷⁷

The piracy of the North was a very active agent in perpetuating that barbarism and ferocity of which it was also the consequence. Like our modern slave traffic, wherever it came it desolated; and while it reigned, it kept down the human capacity in the bondage of the most destructive warfare, penury, and blood.

⁷² Snorre has preserved some of the laws of Harald, in his Haralld's Saga, c. 6. p. 79.

⁷³ Post obitum Halfdani Nigri regnum ab eo relictum invasere principum multi. Snorre, Haralld's Saga, c. 1. p. 75. He details the invasions, their issue, and Harald's retaliations.

⁷⁴ Islandia inhabitatur primum a Norwegis diebus Haraldi Harfager. Ara Frode, c. 1. p. 6. Eo tempore erat Islandia sylvis concreta, c. 2. p. 10. The Norwegian emigrants

found some Christians in it, who went away on their arrival, leaving some Irish books behind. Ib. Ara Frode was born 1060. Snorre says, he was the first of all who wrote hac in regione sermone Norwegico tam prisce quam recentioris ævi monumenta. Preface, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Orkneyinga Saga, p. 3. ed. Hafniæ, 1780.

⁷⁶ Snorre, Haralld's Saga, c. 20. p. 96.

⁷⁷ Snorre, ib.

Auspicious to man was the hour when the abolition of the petty kingships, the aggregation of dominion, and the rise of monarchies, created at once both the power and the desire to suppress the *dæmon* pirates. When Harald had stretched his sceptre over all Norway, every aggression of piracy was an attack on some of his subjects; and as he raised a contribution from their labours,⁷⁸ every act of plunder upon them was a diminution of his revenues.

Harald therefore published an edict, prohibiting piratical excursions on any part of his dominions.⁷⁹ He enforced his law by a vindictive pursuit of the race he discountenanced. He prepared armaments; they fled; he chased them from his own dominions; he followed them to Shetland, to the Orkneys, and to the Hebrides; he overtook and destroyed them.⁸⁰

The life of Harald stretched into the reign of Athelstan. It is said, that Athelstan had, in his youth, visited Denmark.⁸¹ It is, however, certain, that when the Anglo-Saxon was on his throne, an intercourse, which announced high friendship, commenced between the two sovereigns. Harald sent to Athelstan his son Haco, to be educated, and to learn the customs of the English nation.⁸² The Anglo-Saxons were so much higher in the scale of civilization than the Norwegians, who were but just emerging into visible humanity, that we may easily conceive that Haco was sent to Athelstan for his personal improvement, as in our days, Peter the Great, for the same purpose, travelled Europe. This simple explanation

⁷⁸ It was one of his laws that *Regi que census fundi solverent coloni omnes, ditiores æque ac pauperes*. Snorre, *Haralld's Saga*, p. 80. He deputed to his Iarls, whom he placed over every fylki, the power of collecting the taxation, of which they received a third to support their rank and expenditure. *Ib.*

⁷⁹ *Haralld's Saga*, c. 24. p. 100.

⁸⁰ Snorre, p. 98.

⁸¹ It is Wallingford who affirms this, in

his *Chronica*, though on what authority I know not: "*Descenderat enim aliquando in tempore patris sui ad Gytrum in Daciam*," p. 540.

⁸² Theodoric, one of the most ancient historians of Norway, so informs us: "*Haraldus miserat unum ex filiis suis Halstano regi Anglorum Hocon nomine ut nutriretur et disceret morem gentis*." *Ilist. Norw.* c. 2. p. 7.

may be allowed to displace the narration of Snorre, which, on this subject, resembles more a chapter in the Edda than an historical chronicle. He talks of Athelstan sending ambassadors to present Harald with a sword, that when the Norwegians handled it, they might exclaim, "You are now his Thane, because you have taken his sword." To return the polite joke, Harald is stated to have sent his officer to England with his son. The officer placed the child on the knee of Athelstan, and said, "Harald commands you to nourish his illegitimate child."⁸³

The simple expressions of Theodoric, "ut disceret morem gentis," discountenance these idle fables—the children of ignorant rumour. That Athelstan caused his ward to be taught every becoming accomplishment, that he loved him, and that Haco excelled in his studies and exercises, are circumstances not repugnant to our belief. Harald sent to Athelstan the present of a magnificent ship, with a golden beak and purple sails, surrounded with shields, internally gilt.⁸⁴ Haco received from Athelstan a sword, which he kept to his death.⁸⁵

Harald had several wives, and a numerous progeny.⁸⁶ When his death approached, he selected his son Eric to be his successor. He divided some portions of his dominions among his other children.⁸⁷ Their ambition was dissatisfied, and enmities and contests succeeded. Eric, like a crowd of others, saw no crime in actions which secured his greatness, and therefore earned the horrible surname of the slayer of his brothers.⁸⁸ The Norwegian people had more morality than their sovereign, and invited Haco to release them from such a monster.⁸⁹ Athelstan provided his pupil with an equipped fleet and warriors; and with these Haco sailed to Trontheim.⁹⁰

⁸³ Snorre, Haralld's Saga, c. 41, 42. p. 119, 120.

⁸⁴ Malmsbury, 51.

⁸⁵ Snorre, c. 43, p. 121.

⁸⁶ They are enumerated by Snorre, p. 97.

⁸⁷ Snorre, p. 112, 113.

⁸⁸ Theodoric, c. 2, p. 7. Snorre, in the last chapter of his Haralld's Saga, p. 123.

states his fatal warfare against two of his brethren.

⁸⁹ Theodoric, c. 2. p. 7.

⁹⁰ Snorre's Saga Hakonar Goda, c. 1. p. 125. Itineri in Norvegiam hinc mox accingitur, ad quod et copiis et classe bene armata, omnibus que rebus, necessariis, ope Adalsteini regis magnifice instruitur.

Haco's countenance was beautiful, his person robust, his mind disciplined, his manners popular.⁹¹ He was received with joy. The chiefs and people deserted Eric, and Haco was chosen king in his stead.⁹² Haco was rewarded for a virtuous reign, by a permanent and invaluable epithet. Though ten centuries divide him from us, his title still survives—"Haco the Good."

CHAP.

II.

Athelstan.

It was the peculiar glory of Athelstan, that he nurtured and enthroned several kings in Europe. He educated and established Alan of Bretagne, Louis of France, and Haco of Norway; and these actions are not recorded by English writers, but are attested by the chronicles of the countries benefited by his liberality.⁹³ Our own authors, by omitting these circumstances, have concealed part of his fame; but this moderation entitles them to credit in other similar events. We may therefore believe, on their evidence, that he returned to Howel the kingdom of Wales, and to Constantine the kingdom of Scotland, declaring that he would rather bestow kingdoms than enjoy them.⁹⁴ He gave another proof of his magnanimity in this respect, in his reception of Eric, whom, at the call of Norway and of humanity, he had assisted to dethrone. When Eric abandoned the sceptre of Norway, he went to the Orkneys, and, having collected a great army, he plundered along Scotland. Athelstan heard of his vicinity, and sent a message to him, that his father and himself had been united in bonds of the strictest friendship, and that

⁹¹ Theodoric, c. 4. p. 9.

⁹² Snorre, Hakonar Goda, c. 1. and Theodoric, c. 2.

⁹³ For this reason they have hitherto been neglected by our historians. When we recollect the benefits which Athelstan produced to other sovereigns, and the numerous embassies to himself, we must feel that it is not with rhetorical praise that the Abbot of Peterborough says, "Rex Adalsteinus omnium ore laudatur; felicem se credebat quisquis regum exterorum ei affinitate vel fœ-

dere sociari posset." Chron. Petri de Burgo. p. 25.

⁹⁴ Malmsbury, l. 2. c. 6. p. 48. says, "Quos—miseratione infractus in antiquum statum sub se regnatos constituit, gloriosius esse pronuncians regem facere quam regem esse." Hume, with more national feeling than we should have suspected from his philosophy, disbelieves the fact of Constantine, because his countrymen deny it, p. 105; as if they were less interested to disavow, than the Saxons to affirm it.

he wished to shew his esteem for Harald in kindnesses to his son.⁹⁵

Eric gladly accepted his favours, and Athelstan placed him in Northumbria, to reign in feudal subordination to himself.⁹⁶ Eric was baptized, and fixed his habitation at York.⁹⁷ Eric is drawn by Snorre as a tall, active, powerful man; formidable and usually successful in war; fierce, precipitate, selfish, and silent.⁹⁸ His wife, Gunnhilda, has obtained a nich in the uncouth temple of Norwegian history. She was uncommonly beautiful, very intelligent, and engaging; but Nature had placed her among barbarians; and her talents only augmented her power of mischief. She became notorious for her cruelty and deceit.⁹⁹

Athelstan maintained a friendship with Rollo of Normandy, and improved Exeter.

Athelstan is represented to have been a great benefactor to the monastic institutions. He rebuilt many; he was liberal to most, of books, ornaments, or endowments.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Snorre, Hakonar Goda, c. 3.

⁹⁶ Saga Hakonar, c. 3. Theodoric says, "Ipse vero Ericus ad Angliam navigavit et a rege honorifice susceptus ibidem diem obiit, c. 2. p. 7.

⁹⁷ Snorre says at Iorvik (York) "Ubi sedem olim habuisse feruntur Lodbroki filii." Saga Hakonar, c. 3. p. 128. He adds, "Northumbria autem maximam partem erat a Nordmannis habitata. Linguae Norvegicae nomina plurima ejus regionis ferunt loca, Grimbær utpote, Hauksfliot aliaque multa." Ib.

⁹⁸ Haralld's Saga, c. 46. p. 124.

⁹⁹ Haralld's Saga, ib. She is often mentioned in the Norwegian history, at this period. She poisoned her husband's brother, Halfdan. Haralld's Saga, p. 122.

¹⁰⁰ Malmsb. 48. There are two curious MSS. in the Cotton Library, which were presents of Athelstan. One, Tiberius, A. 2. is a MS. of the Latin gospels. Before them is a page of Latin in Saxon characters, of which the first part is, "Volumen hoc evangelii Æthelstan Anglorum basyleos et curagulus totius Britanniae devota mente Dorobernensis cathedrae primatui tribuit." One

page is occupied by the letters LIB, in large gilt capitals, and by the rest of the first verse, in small gilt capitals, on a lilac ground. The following verses, containing the genealogy, are in gilt capitals, on dark blue ground. The first verses of the three other gospels are in gilt capitals, on the uncoloured parchment. To each a painting of the evangelist is prefixed. The rest is written in ink, without abbreviations. In the beginning of the gospels is a page with, "Incipit evangelium secundum Mattheum," in large gilt capitals. Below these words are two crosses; opposite to one is, ODDA REX, and to the other, MIHTHILD MATER REGIS. I am particular in describing the book, because it is declared to have been used for the coronation oath of our Anglo-Saxon kings, and because, from the names of Odda and Mihthild, I would venture to conjecture, that it was a present from Otho of Germany, who married Athelstan's sister, and from Mathilda, the empress of Henry, and mother of Otho. Hrosvida, his contemporary, spells Otho's name Oddo. Reub. 164. There is also in the Cotton Library, a MS. Claudius, B. 5. which contains

Athelstan had received, by his father's care, a lettered education.¹⁰¹ His subsequent cultivation of knowledge has not been transmitted to us; but there is a little catalogue of his books extant, which may not be unworthy of notice.¹⁰²

CHAP.
II.
Athelstan.
Athelstan's
books.

Athelstan, amid his greatness, remembered the poor. He decreed, that each of his gerefas should feed in all ways one poor Englishman, if any such they either had or could find. He ordered that, from every two of his farms, one measure of meal, one gammon of bacon, or a ram worth four pennies, should be monthly given; and clothing for twelve months, every year. He also commanded each of them yearly to redeem one miserable being who had forfeited his liberty by a penal adjudication. He left not these charities as mere precepts, which might be executed or neglected without consequences. He attached the interest of his gerefas to their obedience. "If any gerefas shall disregard this, he shall be fined thirty shillings, and the money shall be divided among the needy of the town."¹⁰³

It was a common saying of the Anglo-Saxons of Athelstan, that no one more legally or more learnedly conducted a

the proceedings of the sixth synod of Constantinople, in the seventh century. The first page of this contains part of the title in very large capitals, partly red. The next page has the rest of the title in smaller capitals, and below these, in Saxon characters, are these words: "Hunc codicem Æthelstanus rex tradidit Deo et almæ Christi genitrici Sanctisque Petro et Benedicto in Bathoniæ civitatis cœnobio ob remunerationem suæ animæ et quisquis hos legerit characteres omnipotenti pro eo proque suis amicis fundat preces." At the end of the MS. is a paragraph, stating, that it was written in the time of pope Sergius. A marginal note is inserted by Sir Robert Cotton, stating, that as Sergius was pope in 690, and the synod was held in 681, the book must have been written in the tenth year after the synod. In the same valuable library, Galba, A. 18. is a small sized MS. which has come down to us as the Psalter used by Athelstan. In the

beginning is a very ancient calendar in Saxon letters, written in 703, ut apparet in codice. The rest is composed of prayers, the Latin Psalter, and several other hymns, very handsomely written. Every psalm is begun with gilt capitals, with a title preceding in red letters. It has several ornamental paintings.

¹⁰¹ Malmsbury, p. 49.

¹⁰² It is in Saxon characters in the Cotton Library, Domitian, A. 1. in these words: "This syndon tha bec the Æthelstanes wæran. De natura rerum; Persius, de arte metrica; Donatum minorem; Excerptiones de metrica arte; Apocalypsin; Donatum majorem, Alchuinum; Glossa super Catonem; Libellum de grammatica arte qui sic incipit, &c. Sedulium 7 1 ge rim was Alfwoldes preostes, Glossa super Donatum, Dialogorum." MSS. p. 55.

¹⁰³ Wilkins, 56.

government.¹⁰⁴ It is not at all surprizing, that he was a favourite both among his own people and in Europe.¹⁰⁵ He was certainly a great and illustrious character. He appears to have been as amiable as great. To the clergy he was attentive and mild; to his people affable and pleasant. With the great he was dignified; with others he laid aside his state, and was condescending and decently familiar. His stature was almost the middle size; his hair yellowish, twisted with golden threads. His people loved him for his bravery and humility; but his enemies felt his wrath.¹⁰⁶

The memory of Athelstan is stained with the murder of his brother. When Athelstan acceded, his elevation was opposed by one Alfred, who disdained his authority. On his apprehension, there appeared persons who arraigned Edwin, then a youth, the brother of Athelstan, as an accomplice in the rebellion. Edwin, by himself and his friends, implored the confidence of the king, and denied the charge by his oath. But Athelstan ordered Edwin, with one attendant, to be put to sea in a shattered boat without oars. For some time the prince continued in sight of land, but the winds at last rose, and he was carried over the seas out of hope. In despair, he sprung upon the waves, and was their immediate victim. His body was brought to shore, between Dover and Whitsand. For seven years, Athelstan mourned his death with a penitence which could neither compensate nor obliterate the crime.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Malmsb. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Tota Europa laudes ejus prædicabat, virtutem in cælum ferebat, &c. Malmsb. 51.

¹⁰⁶ Malm. has given us this portrait, p. 50.

¹⁰⁷ Malmsb. 48, 53, 251. Sim. Dun. 134, 154. Hoveden, 422. Hunt. 354. Matt. West. 362; and Bromton, 836.

CHAP. III.

Edmund *the Elder*.

ATHELSTAN having left no children, his brother Edmund succeeded at the age of eighteen.¹

Anlaf, the Northumbrian prince, who fought the battle of Brunanburh against Athelstan, renewed his competition with Edmund. The inconstant Northumbrians encouraged his hopes; they invited him from Ireland, and appointed him their king.²

Collecting a great armament, he sailed to York, and thence marched towards Mercia, to wrest the crown of England from the head of Edmund.³ He assaulted Tamworth. Edmund, whom the Saxon song styles, "the lord of the English—the protector of his relations—the author of mighty deeds," armed on the hostility, and marched against Anlaf to the "way of the White Wells, and where the broad stream of the Humber flowed."⁴

Edmund had less abilities or less fortune than Athelstan; for Anlaf was victorious at Tamworth.⁵ But the Anglo-Saxon

CHAP.
III.
Edmund
the Elder.
941.

¹ Flor. Wig. 350. Sax. Chron. 114. Al. Bev. 110. Ing. 29. The Sax. Chron. Tib. B. 4. dates Athelstan's death in 940. So Tib. B. 1.

² Malmsb. 53. Flor. Wig. 350. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. has this passage, which is not in the printed one: "941, her Northymbra alugon hira getreowatha 7 Anlaf of Yrlande him to cinge gecuron."

³ Matt. West. 365.

⁴ The first paragraph of the reign of Edmund, in the Saxon Chronicle, is obviously an extract from a poem:

Her Edmund cyning,
Engla theoden,
Maga mundbora
Myrce geeode:

Dyre dæd fruma
Swador scadeth
Hwitan wylles geat
7 Humbra ea
Brada brým stream.

P. 114.

⁵ I have seen this fact nowhere mentioned but in the MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tiberius, B. 4. "943, Her Anlaf abræc Tamewurthe 7 micel wæl gefeol on ægthra hand 7 tha denan sige ahton 7 micele here hu the mid him aweg læddon. Thær was Wulfrun genumen on thære hergunge." Hoveden hints, that he advanced to Tamwrde, and plundered, p. 423; but neither mentions the Danish victory, nor the capture of Wulfrun.

government had been so fortified by the wise administration of three able sovereigns, that the first successes of Anlaf could not overwhelm it. At Leicester, the king surrounded the invader and his friend Wulfstan, the ambitious and turbulent archbishop of York; but they burst at night out of the city.⁶ A battle ensued, in which the skill and activity of an earl, whose daughter he had married, gave to Anlaf the palm of victory, after a day of conflict.⁷

These defeats inclined Edmund to listen to the negotiation of the archbishops of Canterbury and York. A peace was concluded between the princely rivals, on terms highly honourable to Anlaf, but less creditable to Edmund. To Anlaf was surrendered all that part of England which extended north of Watling-street. Edmund contented himself with the southern regions. But a condition, still more humiliating to the Anglo-Saxons, was added:—whoever survived the other was to be the monarch of the whole.⁸ It happened that Anlaf died in the following year; but he must have had great power, or great talents capable of creating power, to have established for himself so near a chance of the crown of England.

The death of Anlaf removed a perilous competitor, and Edmund availed himself of the casualty to recover the possession of Northumbria.⁹ He also terminated the dangerous independence of the five cities which the Danes had long occupied on the northern frontiers of Mercia and East Anglia. They were, Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford, and Lincoln. The preceding kings seem to have suffered the Danes to retain them; but “the warlike heir of Edward”

⁶ This incident exists only in the MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. It is not in the printed one, nor in Matthew, nor Florence, nor Hoveden, nor Huntingdon, nor Malmesbury, nor Ethelwerd, nor Ingulf. The passage in the MS. Chronicle is thus: “Her Eadmund cyning ymbsæt Anlaf cyning ⁊ Wulfstan arcebiscop on Legra-ceastre ⁊ he hy gewealdon meahthe nære hi

æn niht ut ne ætburstan of thære byrig.”

⁷ Matt. West. 365.

⁸ Matt. West. 365. Hoveden, 423. admits the peace, but omits the last condition. So Mailros, 148. and Sim. Dun. 134.

⁹ Matt. West. 365. The Sax. Chron. Mailros, and others, place Anlaf’s death at this time.

adopted a new policy.¹⁰ He expelled the Northmen, and peopled them with Saxons.¹¹ Two fleeting kings attempted, but in vain, to be permanent in Northumbria.

Edmund extended his conquests to Cumbria, in 946: with the help of the king of South Wales, he ravaged the little kingdom; he cruelly blinded the two sons of Dunmail, its king, and gave it to Malcolm of Scotland, on condition of defending the north of the island against invaders.¹²

When prosperity was every where gladdening his reign, and his ambition had been appeased by the monarchy of England, the king was suddenly killed. The circumstances of his death, however, vary more than a transaction so simple, and so affecting, could be thought to occasion. At Canterbury, according to some;¹³ at Windechirche, according to another;¹⁴ at Michelesberith, as named by a third;¹⁵ at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire, between the Avon and the Severn, according to others;¹⁶ the king was feasting on the day of Saint Augustin, which was always commemorated by the Anglo-Saxons. A man, one Leof, appeared among the company, whom Edmund had six years before banished for pillage. Warmed with the liquor which he had been drinking, the king jumped from his seat, seized the man by the hair, and threw him on the ground;¹⁷ others state, that Leof had

CHAP.

III.

Edmund
the Elder.

941.

¹⁰ On hæthenra
Hæfte clommum
Lange thrage
Oththe hie alyse
Eft for his weorthscype
Wiggendra hleofera Edwardes.

Sax. Ch. 114.

¹¹ Huntingdon, p. 355.

¹² Matt. West. 366. The condition in the Saxon Chronicle, which dates the event in 945, is, that Malcolm should be his mid wýrhta both on sea and land, p. 115. The Welsh Chronicle places it in 944: "Ac y diffeithwyd Strat-clut y gan y saesson." 'Strat-clut was ravaged by the Saxons.' MS. Cleop. B. 5. The MS. Cleop. states the death of Edwal and Elissed against the Saxons.

¹³ Thorn. Chr. p. 1779. Bromton, 858. Hist. Rames. 389. So the Welsh MS. "945, yd oed Edmund Vrenhin yn kynnol gwled yn manachloc Seint Austyn yngkeint." Cleop. B. 5.

¹⁴ Mailros, 148.

¹⁵ Matt. West. 366.

¹⁶ Malmsb. 54. Al. Bev. 111. Hoveden, 423. Ing. 29.

¹⁷ Malmsb. 54. So the Welsh Chronicle: "Ac val ydoed yn bwrw golwc ar hyt y neuad ef a welei Lleidyr a rydaroed y dehoi or ynys kynno hynny ar brenhin a gynodes y vyny ac a doeth hyt yn lle ydoed y lleidyr ac ymavael ac ef ger wallt y ben ay dynnv dros y bwrt." "And, as he was casting his eye along the hall, he saw a thief, who had been given over to banishment from the island be-

quarrelled with the king's cup-bearer, and was about to destroy him, when Edmund interfered;¹⁸ another, perhaps more truly, mentions, that amidst the bacchanalian jollity, a discord, as generally happens, suddenly arose among the guests. In the midst of their fury, the king rose from table to appease, perhaps, to share in the tumult, when the exiled robber stabbed him with a dagger, which he had secreted.¹⁹ It is, however, singular, that, on an incident so palpable and so impressive, such a contrariety of rumours became popular; that Malmsbury states, that his death opened the door for fable all over England;²⁰ and Wallingford was so perplexed as to aver, that it was to his day uncertain who was the murderer, or what was the cause.²¹ Instances like these, which often occur in the history of man, prove the truth of the observation of our most intelligent moralist, that "the usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety."²²

fore. The king arose immediately, and went to the place where the thief was, and laid hold of him by the hair of his head to draw him over the table." MS. Cleop. B. 5.

¹⁸ Flor. Wig. 352. Hoveden, 423. It is said by Alur. Bev. 111. that the king wished to save his Dapifer from the hands of his enemies. Matt. West. narrates, that the king, seeing Leof, nodded to his cup-bearer to turn him out. Leof resisting, Edmund rushed in anger upon him, p. 366.

¹⁹ Hist. Rames, 389.

²⁰ Quo vulnere exanimatus fabulæ janu-

am in omnem Angliam de interitu suo patefecit, p. 54.

²¹ Sed qua ratione vel a quo occisus fuit usque ad præsens incertum habetur. Chron. p. 541. The MS. Saxon Chronicle has a passage on Edmund's death, not in the printed one: "Tha wæs wide cuth hu he his dagas geendode tha Liofa hinc æfstang æt Pulcan cyrcan. Tib. B. 4.

²² Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, vol. 2. p. 289. 5th ed. 8vo. a work which displays a highly accomplished and candid mind in the full exertion of its most enlightened energies.

CHAP. IV.

The Reign of Edred.

EDRED, who succeeded Edmund, was the third son of Edward, who had reigned after his father, Alfred. As the preceding king, the elder brother of Edred, was but eighteen years of age when he acceded, Edred must have been less than twenty-three at his elevation. His reign was short. Disease produced to him that crisis which the arm of violence had occasioned to his predecessor.

The most remarkable circumstance of Edred's short reign was, the complete incorporation of Northumbria. It had been often conquered before. Its independence was now entirely annihilated.

It has been mentioned, that Athelstan gave the Northumbrian crown to Eric the son of Harald of Norway, who had been expelled his paternal inheritance, for his fratricides and cruelty. But peaceful dignity can have no charms but for the cultivated mind, the sensualist, or the timid. It can be but a scene of apathy to those who have been accustomed to the violent agitations of barbarian life; whose noblest hope has been an ample plunder; whose most pleasurable excitations have arisen from the exertion and the triumphs of war. Eric therefore still loved the activity of depredation. The numerous friends with kindred feelings, who crowded to him from Norway, displeased or disappointed in the government of Haco, cherished his turbulent feelings; and to feed, to employ, or to emulate them, he amused his summer months by pirating on Scotland, the Hebrides, Ireland, and Wales.* In

CHAP.

IV.

Edred.

946.

* Snorre, Saga Hakonar Goda, c. 4. p. 123.

the reign of Edmund, perceiving that this king or his unquiet subjects desired a new regent, he hastened to his beloved ocean and its plunder. From the Orkneys he collected some companions. In the Hebrides he found many vikingr and sea kings,² who joined their forces to aid his fortunes. He led them first to Ireland; thence to Wales; and, at last reaching England, he plundered extensively. The Northumbrians again received him as their king,³ and Eric became formidable to the Anglo-Saxons.

It had happened that before this event, this people had sworn fidelity to Edred, at Tadwines cliffe.⁴ Provoked by this rebellion, Edred assembled a vindictive army, and spread devastation over Northumbria. As he returned, the Northmen warily followed him from York, and at Casterford surprized and destroyed his rear guard. Enraged at the disaster, the king stopped his retreat, and again sought Northumbria with augmented fury. Terrified at his power and its effects, the people threw off Eric, and appeased Edred with great pecuniary sacrifices.⁵

But Eric was not to be discarded with impunity. He collected his forces, and gave battle to the revolters. Snorre mentions Olafe as the friend of Edred.⁶ Simeon of Durham omits him, but notices his son Maccus.⁷ The Icclander states the battle to have lasted the whole day, and that Eric and five other kings, among whom he names Gothorm, and his sons Ivar and Harekr, probably sea kings, perished; Rognvalldr and others also fell.⁸ Our chronicler, Matthew, admits such

² Snorre, Saga Hakonar Goda, c. 4. p. 128.

³ Flor. Wig. 352. He calls him Ircus. Saxon Chronicle says, Yric, the son of Harold, p. 115. So Wallingford, 541. The Chronicle of Mailros also calls him Eyric the son of Harold, p. 148. Ingulf names him Hircius, p. 30. Simeon calls him Eiric, a Dane, 134. Matthew has Eilric, p. 368.

⁴ Hoveden, 423. Flor. 352. The printed Chronicle has nothing of this. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. states it.

⁵ Flor. Wig. 352, 353. Hoveden, 423. The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. supplies on this incident the silence of the one printed, by a long passage, of which the paragraphs in Florence and Hoveden seem to be a translation. In the MS. Tib. B. 1. there is a blank from 946 to 956.

⁶ Hakonar Saga, p. 129.

⁷ Simeon, 204.

⁸ Snorre, 129. He errs in placing the catastrophe under Edmund.

a catastrophe, but states that Osulf betrayed Eric, and that Maccus fraudulently killed him in a desert.⁹

Edred improved the moment by exerting all the power of conquest. He carried away in bonds the proudest nobles of the country;¹⁰ he imprisoned Wulfstan, the turbulent archbishop;¹¹ he annexed Northumbria inseparably to his dominions; and to govern it the more easily, he partitioned it into baronies and counties, over which he placed officers of his own appointment.¹² Osulf, whose treachery had produced the destruction of Eric, was the first earl; to whom in another reign Oslac was added.¹³

In 955, Edred died; but not worn out by old age, as some have dreamt.¹⁴ One expression has descended to us, *debilis pedibus*, weak in the feet.¹⁵ We also learn from the writing of an author, almost, if not quite, his contemporary, that his indisposition, rather an offensive one, lasted all his reign; and, by a gradual wasting, produced his death.¹⁶

955.

⁹ Matt. West. 369. Sim. 204. Matthew says, "that with Eric fell his son Henricus, and his brother Reginaldus. He perhaps means the Harekr and Rognvaldr of Snorre. Our writers mention no battle; but this additional incident is highly credible. Mailros calls Eric the last king of Northumbria, 148.

¹⁰ Ingulf, 41. He adds a dreadful picture of Edred's invasion: "Erasaque tota terra et in cineres redacta ita ut multis milliariis longo tempore sequenti solitudo fieret."

¹¹ Flor. 353. Matt. West. 369. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. is like the passage in Florence.

¹² Wallingford, 541.

¹³ Mailros, 148. Sim. Dun. 204.

¹⁴ It is curious to read in Wallingford, p. 542, that old age greatly vexed Edred, and that multis incommodis quæ senes solent circumvenire ad extrema deduxit. Among these evils of senility, he particularizes the loss of teeth, debility, and the frequent cough, familiaris senibus. Yet this *old* man could not have been much above thirty; for he was under twenty-three at his accession, and he reigned nine years.

¹⁵ It is Hermannus who has left us this trait. His MS. is in the Cotton Library, Tib. B. 2.

¹⁶ Vita Dunstani, p. 75. MS. Cotton Library, Cleopatra, B. 13.

CHAP. V.

The Reign of Edwin.

BOOK

VI.

Edwin.

955.

EDWIN,¹ who has been usually called Edwy, the eldest son of Edmund the elder, succeeded his uncle Edred, at the age of sixteen.²

It was his misfortune to live in one of those periods, which have frequently occurred in the history of mankind, when new opinions and new systems are introduced into society, which essentially counteract the subsisting establishments. The ardour of the discussions, and the opposition of interests

¹ He is commonly called Edwy; but the old authorities are numerous, which express his name to have been Edwin. Of chroniclers that have been printed, he is styled Edwin—by Ingulf, p. 41; by Alured of Beverly, p. 111; by Simeon Dunelm, p. 135; by Wallingford, 541; by Ethelridus Rievallensis, 359; by Knyghton, 2312; by Hoveden, 425; by Bromton, 863; by Malmsbury, 201; by the Hist. Ramesiensis, 389; by Thorn, 2243; by Higden, 263; by Radulf de Diceto, 455; and by the authors in Leland's Collectanea, v. 1. p. 241, 260, 304. and v. 3. p. 399. Rudborne says, Edwyi, sive Edwini, p. 217. The unpublished MSS. in the Cotton Library, that I have seen, which name him Edwin, are also numerous. The Chronicles in Dom. A. 12. p. 62; Dom. A. 3.; Peter de Ickham, p. 24; Vesp. E. 4. p. 110; Faustina, A. 8. p. 77. and B. 6. p. 66; Thomas de Elmham; Claudius, E. 4. p. 54; Nero, A. 6. p. 9; Vesp. B. 11. p. 1. and 73; Cleop. B. 13. p. 130; Vesp. A. 16. p. 43; and Joh. Oxenedes, Nero, D. 2. p. 215; Calig. A. 3. p. 19; also, in the King's Library, 13. D. 1; so the Welsh Chronicle, Cleop. B. 5. But the Saxon Chronicle, 115; Ethelwerd, 849; and a coin (see it in Gough's Camden, cxv.) have Eadwig. Matt. West. printed, has Edwius. A MS. of part of his book, erroneously entitled Gode-

frid of Malmsbury, has Edwinus. Vesp. D. 4. p. 96. Edwin and Edwig have the same meaning—"prosperous in battle." On the whole it appears to me, that Edwy, Edwin, and Edwig, are the same name; but as Edwy is apparently a familiar abbreviation, it cannot be entitled to a place in history any more than Willy or Harry: I have therefore inserted Edwin, which has most authorities in its favour.

² For Edwin to have been sixteen at his accession, his father must have married at fifteen, because Edmund was eighteen in 941. This seems almost too early to be true; and yet there is no alternative, for Edwin, at his coronation, appears to us also as married. It shews us, indeed, how early the Anglo-Saxons sometimes united—Edmund at fifteen; his son Edwin at sixteen. If there be an error any where, it must be in Edmund's age at his accession, for that makes him and Edred to have been born in the two last years of their father's reign; yet Edmund's age is attested by Ingulf, Flor. Al. Bev. already quoted, and also by the Sax. Chron. 144. Sim. Dun. 155. Malmsb. 53. and others. Eadgiva, the mother of Edwin and Edgar, left a will, which yet exists: in this she mentions Edwin, and she calls him a child. See it in the Appendix to Lye's Saxon Dictionary.

and prejudices, inflame the mind and passions of the country; cruelty and persecution, hatred and revenge, usually accompany the conflict, and both the advocates for the revolution and its opponents become alike fanatical, ferocious, unjust, and implacable.

CHAP.
V.
Edwin.

In the tenth century, a new religious system was spreading in Europe, which occasioned the misfortunes of the reign of Edwin. This was the Benedictine order of monks—an order which, in the course of time, became celebrated in Europe beyond every other.³

The Benedictine Order.

It is a fact perpetually pressed upon the notice of the historian, that individuals often appear who seem to act at random, yet whose notions are destined to affect ages and nations. One of these was Benedict, an Italian, born 480,⁴ whose unfortunate associations induced him to descend into a deep cavern in a desert, and to reside there for several years, known only to a friend, who let down his provisions. His singularities attracted notice, and, being connected with piety, at last produced veneration. His admiring spectators were so numerous, that he was enabled to found many monasteries near him. He afterwards went to Mount Cassin, in the kingdom of Naples, destroyed some temples of idolatry which he found there, erected a monastery, and laid down a new series of rules for its governance.⁵

Benedict died about 543.⁶ Soon afterwards the Lombards destroyed his monastery at Mount Cassin. The monks fled to pope Pelagius, who, by giving them an asylum, kept alive an institution destined to overspread the West.

The memory of Benedict was preserved, and peculiarly

³ It is not, however, safe to adopt implicitly the statement of Trithemius, p. 238. though Baronius follows it. This enumerates eighteen popes, above 200 cardinals, 1,600 archbishops, about 4,000 bishops, 15,700 abbots, and 15,600 saints, to have been of the order before his time, who was born 1462.

⁴ Dupin, v. 2. p. 45. sixth century. Fab. Bib. Med. 1. p. 533.

⁵ The rule is in the Bibliotheca Magna Patrum, v. 15. p. 690. There are also some Anglo-Saxon translations of it in the Cotton Library.

⁶ Fabricius mentions that others talk of 542, and 547.

sanctified by the famous pope Gregory, who devoted one book of dialogues to record his pretended miracles.⁷ By the influence of the third Gregory, who died 742, the monastery at Mount Cassin was rebuilt, and this new construction first began the establishment of its fame. Zachary, the following pope, sent them the MS. rule of Benedict, and gave them, as a mark of his favour, the important and attractive privilege of being under no bishop, and no jurisdiction, but that of the pope.⁸

The Benedictine rule began now to diffuse itself beyond Italy. Boniface, the Anglo-Saxon missionary to Germany, built a Benedictine monastery in Fulda, which the pope sanctioned, and which Pepin exempted from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but the papal.⁹ Boniface describes his monks as men of strict abstinence, who used neither flesh, wine, nor strong drink, nor servants, but who were contented with the produce of their own labour.¹⁰ He interested Carloman so much in his favour, that in his reign the clergy of Gaul were urged to patronize it.¹¹

The order increased, though slowly, till the beginning of the tenth century. Berno, preferring it to other monastic rules, introduced it at Clugny in 910. One of his pupils was Odo, who succeeded him, and who seconded his partiality to this order, added something to its regulations, and endeavoured to introduce it at Fleury, whither the body of Benedict had been transported from Cassin.¹²

Fleury having been plundered by the Normans, the monks who returned to it were living irregularly when Odo began his attempt. They opposed him at first even with weapons. His eloquence or contrivances so changed their feelings, that

⁷ Gregory's Dial. 1. 2. Gregory characterizes his rule as, *discretionem præcipuam, sermone luculentam*. Dial. p. 275.

⁸ See Marsham's *Προηγούμενοι*, prefixed to Dugdale's *Monasticon*, v. 1.

⁹ See the letters of Boniface and Zachary, 16. Mag. B. Pat. 115. and of Pepin, p. 121.

Our countryman describes the place thus: "Est præterea locus sylvaticus in cremo vastissimæ solitudinis." Ib. 115.

¹⁰ Bonif. ib.

¹¹ See the two councils held in 742, in Bib. Mag. Pat. p. 84, 85.

¹² Marsham ubi sup.

before his death, in 944, it was so firmly established at Fleury, that this place became the chief seminary from which it was disseminated in the West.

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V.
Edwin.

Its success as an instrument of discipline; the sanctified celebrity of its author; the necessity of some reformation, and the novelty of this, gave it a sudden and extending eclat. Fleury became famous for its order, and its monks were sent for to other places, to reform and to regulate them. Thus it perpetually happens in human life, that new plans become popular without any adequate reason; and when they begin to spread, they acquire a circulation infinitely beyond their intrinsic merit, because they happen to soothe some momentary feeling, or to promote some meditated interest.

The monastery of Fleury was eagerly encouraging the rule, when Odo, an ecclesiastic in England, was offered the see of Canterbury. He was the son of one of those ferocious Northmen who had infested England under Ingwar and Ubbo.¹³ He was himself a soldier in the first part of life, in the reign of Edward,¹⁴ and he quitted the military profession to assume the ecclesiastic. He attended Athelstan in the battle of Brunanburh; and, as other bishops often combated at that time, and as it is confessed that he knew immediately of the king's sword breaking in the conflict, and supplied the loss, it is probable that he partook of the fray,¹⁵ though his encomiasts talk only of his prayers. These circumstances may be worth noticing, as they explain that stern severity, that savage fierceness of temper which was so unhappily exerted against Edwin and Elgiva. He was raised through other gradations to the primacy of England.

When Odo was offered the see of Canterbury, he was unwilling to accept it, from his enthusiastic zeal for the new

¹³ Malmsb. 200. Osberne, 2 Ang. Sax. p. 78. pope Zachary's letter to the bishops, 16 Mag. Bib. Pat. p. 110—116. and Boniface, ib.

¹⁴ Malmsb. 200. Matt. West. 359.

¹⁵ Though councils and kings expressly time. yet it was very frequent at this forbad ecclesiastics to mix in battle, (see

system of monkery, until he had become a monk; and he selected Fleury as the place wherein he chose to make his profession.¹⁶

To Odo, the new order became known with some impressive recommendations. Its most recent and active apostle was a namesake, which is a little appeal to human vanity, that never occurs unheard. Its revered author was consecrated by Gregory's Dialogues, a work made accessible to him, and perhaps popular, by Werefrith's translation. It had been patronized by Boniface, the German apostle; and its strict discipline was grateful to that stern, unfeeling, and illiberal temper, which ruled the actions of Odo. Fame, that versatile echo, which changes its phrases with every variation of human caprice, was also connecting applause with the names of the revivers of the new institution. Odo, therefore, came to his metropolitan dignity a decisive friend, and an aspiring patron of the Benedictine order.

But if a more impetuous prompter had not actuated Odo, there is no reason to believe that he would have disturbed England by his partiality for the new system. He had a harshness of temper capable of being stimulated to acts of ferocity, but he had no extraordinary ability of mind. He therefore wanted that self-active energy which generally accompanies every unusual share of talent. Though high in favour with several sovereigns, he made no effort to compel the English to adopt the reform of Fleury. A letter of his to the clergy of the country, exhorting them to discharge their duty with zealous care, yet exists; but it does not even mention the Benedictine system.

Life of Dun-
stan.

The man who set England in flames was Dunstan, a character certainly formed by nature to act a distinguished part

¹⁶ Chron. Petrib. 26. Malmsb. 200.

¹⁷ See it in Malmsb. de Pont. p. 200. Its first phrase is an unfortunate attempt at eloquent latinity. "Mirabili cuncti potentis præsulis polorum clementia opitulante, Ego

Odo," &c. Another sentence expresses something of his temper, "Spiritali charitate, *etiam comitatus rigore*." There is another letter of his in Wharton's Anglia Sacra, v. 2. p. 50.

in the varied theatre of life. His progress to honour is worth our contemplation, as it affords a curious instance of great talents, perverted from the path of glory by injudicious tuition, and an inordinate ambition.¹⁸

Dunstan was born in 925.¹⁹ His parents were Heorstan and Cynethryth,²⁰ who seem to have lived near Glastonbury.²¹ Dunstan frequently visited the old British church there.²² It is said he had here a vision of his future greatness, and that a venerable phantom pointed out the place where he was to build a superb monastery.²³ Ambitious talents have so many day dreams of approaching honours, that the delusion may sometimes recur amid the nightly chimæras of the reposing imagination.

¹⁸ There are several lives of Dunstan extant. One written by Osbern, who flourished about the year 1070. See it in Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, v. 2. p. 88. One also by Eadmer, p. 211. There are two ancient ones in the Cotton Library. One, Nero, C. 7. was written by Adalardus Blandiniensis Monachus, in the tenth century, or in the beginning of the eleventh, addressed to Elphegus, the archbishop of Canterbury, and composed at his request. But the author says, "Scias autem in opere isto hystoriam vitæ ejus non contineri sed ex eadem vita quasi brevem sermonis versiculum," &c. This life is full of miracles and panegyric, with scarcely any biographical notices. The most curious and ancient life of Dunstan is in the same library, Cleopatra, B. 13. It was written by a person who was his contemporary, or nearly so. For, speaking of an incident in his monastery, he says, it happened when all the monks were absent, except Dunstan, parvo que scolastico qui postea Pontifex effectus hæc nobis intimavit. It has plenty of flattery and wonder, but it contains some curious traits of biography, which enable us to sketch his mind. Matthew of Westminster, Malmsbury, and Osbern, have taken many things from it. It seems the one mentioned by Wharton, with the name of Bridferth.

¹⁹ In the year of Athelstan's accession, which some place 924, and some 925. Matt. West. 360.

²⁰ MSS. Cleop. B. 13. Adelard, in Nero, C. 7. is so impatient to get at his miracles, that he annexes one to Dunstan before he was born.

²¹ *Erat autem regalis in confinio ejusdem præfati viri insula antiquo vicinorum vocabulo Glastonia nuncupata.* MSS. Cleop. B. 13. This life of Dunstan had been read by Malmsbury, for he quotes this passage from it; and says, he saw the book at St. Augustin's in Canterbury, and at another place. *De Ant. Glast.* p. 293. The MS. in the Cotton Library, is probably the identical book which our Malmsbury saw; for Joscelin has written upon it, that in August 1565, he found it among other old MSS. at the Augustine monastery at Canterbury. Usher has added a note making the same inference.

²² The author's phrase is, that the first Neophytes found there an old church not built with human hands. I translate his words to mean, that the Anglo-Saxons found one there ready built, and of course by the Britons.

²³ MSS. Cleop.

His parents encouraged him to study, and his penetrating abilities enabled him to excel his companions, and to run with easy rapidity through the course of his studies.²⁴

A fever interrupted his advancement, and all the horrors of a temporary frenzy ensued, accompanied with that debility which in this disease sometimes announces the departure of life, and sometimes a crisis which is to end in convalescence. In this state a sudden access of delirium came on. He leapt from his bed, eluded his nurse, and seizing a stick which was near him, he ran over the neighbouring plains and mountains, fancying that wild dogs were pursuing him. His wanderings led him towards night near the church. Workmen, during the day, had been mending the roof. Dunstan ran madly up their scaffold, roamed over the top, and with that casual felicity which frenzy sometimes experiences, he got unconsciously to the bottom of the church, where a heavy sleep concluded his delirious excursion.²⁵ He waked with returned intellect, and was naturally surprized at his new situation. As the church doors had not been opened, both he and the attendants of the place wondered how he got there.²⁶

²⁴ Adelard calls him, *indole acerrimus*. Nero, C. 7. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. says, *coætaneos quosque præcellerat et suorum tempora studiorum facili cursu transiliret*.

²⁵ This is the statement in the MS. Cleop. B. 13. which I think to be peculiarly valuable, because it shews us the simple and natural truth of an incident which the future biographers of Dunstan have converted into an elaborate and ridiculous miracle. It gives a good specimen how monastic fancy, by its peculiar machinery, has transformed natural incidents into celestial achievements. When reflection sobers the mind of Achilles, it is Pallas who descends to whisper in his ear; when Dunstan runs over a church in a delirium, angels are called down to protect him from the devil, to burst the roof, and to place him safely on the pavement.

²⁶ This ancient life gives to this event none of those silly appendages of angels and devils, which credulity afterwards added. After mentioning his sleep, it merely says, "*Exsurgens autem post momenti spatium ammirari admodum una cum custodibus cæperat quo pacto, quove ingenio introierat, cernens etiam quod templi ostium clausum munitum que extiterat.*" MS. Cleop. Its next phrase, that Dunstan acknowledged the hand of Providence in his preservation, merely expresses his pious feelings. It does not invest it with the miraculous colouring of later writers. The wonderful was, however, soon added, for we find it in Adelard; and yet even his statement reveals the truth, and shews that the falsehood was the creature of ignorance. "*Ubi mane inventus cum consuleratur qualiter ille incolumis adveniret, qui sero pene contiguus morti exterius erat relictus hoc se*

His parents obtained for him an introduction into the ecclesiastical establishment at Glastonbury. He continued his studious applications, and there is no reason to disbelieve the statement, that his conduct at this time was moral and religious.²⁷

CHAP.
V.
Edwin.

Some Irish ecclesiastics had settled at Glastonbury, and were teaching the liberal studies to the children of the nobility. Dunstan attached himself to their instructions, and diligently explored their books.²⁸

The first part of his life was a laborious cultivation of mind, and he seems to have attained all the knowledge to which it was possible for him to gain access. He mastered such of the mathematical sciences as were then taught; he excelled in music; he accomplished himself in writing, painting, and engraving; he acquired also the manual skill of working in gold and silver, and even copper and iron.²⁹ These arts had not at that day reached any pre-eminent merit, but it was uncommon that a man should practise himself in all. To have excelled his contemporaries in mental pursuits, in the fine arts, though then imperfectly practised, and in mechanical labours, is evidence of an activity of intellect, and an ardour for improvement, which proclaim him to have been a superior personage, whose talents might have blessed the world.

When his age admitted, he commenced his career of public life as a courtier. Some relation introduced him into the royal

ignorare respondit et rumore miraculi grata ignorantia auxit." Adelard, MSS. Nero, C. 7.

²⁷ MSS. Cleop. B. 13.

²⁸ Osbern Vita Dunstani, p. 92. MS. Cleop. B. 13.

²⁹ Osberne, 93, 94. His attainments are thus enumerated in the MS. Cleop. B. 13: "Hic itaque inter sacra litterarum studia—artem scribendi nec ne citharizandi pariter

que pingendi peritiam diligenter excoluit atque ut ita dicam omnium rerum utensilium vigil inspector fulsit." This MS. mentions a particular instance of his painting and embroidery: "Quandam stolam diversis formularum scematibus perpingeret quam postea posset auro gemmis que variando pompare." It also mentions, that he took with him ex more cytharam suam quam lingua paterna hearpam vocamus.

palace, and his musical talents interested and often recreated the king.³⁰

No circumstance can more impressively attest the superiority of Dunstan's attainments, than his having been accused, while at court, of demoniacal arts.³¹ Such charges give demonstration of the talents and knowledge of the person so accused. In the very same century another man of eminence suffered under a similar imputation, because he had made a sphere, invented clocks, and attempted a telescope.³² The charge of magic was of all others the most destructive, because the most difficult to repel. Every exertion of superior intellect in defence was misconstrued to be preternatural, and confirmed the imputation.

His enemies were successful. The king was influenced against him, and Dunstan was driven from court³³—from that Eden of his hopes, where, like another Wolsey, he was planning to be naturalized.

His courtly rivals were not content with his disgrace: they insulted as well as supplanted him; they pursued and threw him into a miry marsh. He extricated himself on their retreat, and reached a friend's house about a mile distant.³⁴

³⁰ Adelard says: "De Glestonia egressus Archo Dorobernensi Adelmo patruo scilicet suo se junxit et cohabitare cepit—in palatio cum præsensavit et regi Athelstano—magno affectu commendavit." Nero, C. 7. Osbern implies the same, p. 94. But I think the king should be Edmund. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. mentions his living in Edmund's palace, where plans were formed against him.

³¹ Asserentes illum malis artibus imbutum nec quicquam divino auxilio sed pleraque dæmonum præstigio operari, Osb. 95. The MS. Cleop. B. 13. thus expresses it: "Dicientes eum ex libris salutaribus et viris peritis non saluti animæ profutura sed avitæ gentilitatis vanissima dedecisse carmina et histriarum colere incantationes,

³² This was Gerbert, who became archbishop of Rheims and of Ravenna; and in 999 was made pope, under the name of Sylvester II. "He had learned the mathematics in Spain: his knowledge made him pass for a magician, and gave rise to the fable of his being promoted to the Papal chair by a contract which he made with the devil." Dupin, 10 cen. p. 44. and see Matt. West. 348. and Malmsb. 65.

³³ Criminati sunt illum falsa quadam objectione apud regem impetraverunt que ut ab eorum consortio pelleretur. MS. Cleop. B. 13.

³⁴ MS. Cleop.

Thus far Dunstan appears neither unamiable nor uninteresting. Youthful ambition is the parent of much excellence; it is an honourable energy in the spring-time of life, when the buds of expectation are incessantly shooting. Selfishness may pervert the best feelings of the heart; but this is the child of experience and hardship, and seldom influences the season of youth. Dunstan's pursuit of distinction, though perhaps questionable as to its prudence, was no immoral impulse. His means were the most honourable he could employ—the cultivation of his mind, the increase of his knowledge, and their unrestrained exertion.

To be checked in the first madness of our juvenile ambition, may often introduce the invaluable treasures of moderate wishes, moral prudence, and becoming humility. There is no evidence that the effects of Dunstan's disgrace were at first any other. He was repelled from the paths of political greatness, and he submitted to the necessity; he turned his eye from the proud but tempestuous mountains of life, to its lowly but pleasant vales, where happiness loves to abide, the companion of the industrious, the contented, and the good. After he left the court, he formed an attachment to a maiden, whom he wished to marry.³⁵

It is with blended pity and indignation we read that such honourable impressions were estimated but as diabolical suggestions by the relations and biographers of Dunstan. Ælfheag, his relation, opposed these domestic feelings. He directed the batteries of his superstitious eloquence against Dunstan's fair propensities; he conjured him to coerce nature, and to become a monk.

³⁵ It is the MS. Cleop. which informs us of this curious circumstance. It says, the devil primum enim mulierum illi iniecit amorem quo per familiares earum amplexus mundanis oblectamentis frueretur. Interea propinquus ipsius Ælfheagus cognomine Calvus

præsul quo fidelis petitionibus multis et spiritualibus monitis eum rogavit ut fieret monachus. Quod ille instinctu præfati fraudatoris renuntians *maluit sponsare juvenulam* cujus cotidie blanditiis foveretur quam more monachorum bidentinis indui panniculis.

Dunstan was at first insensible to his oratory. He replied to Ælfheag's reasoning, that the man who lived from choice regularly in the world, was of greater excellence than he who, having entered a monastery, could not avoid doing what his order enjoined. The man in the world displays moral freedom and voluntary rectitude; the monk was a creature of compulsion and necessity. Ælfheag opposed the discriminating remark, by arguing on the future punishment, on the importance of extinguishing the fire of passion, and of avoiding its incitements by withdrawing from the world.³⁶ Dunstan still resisted: his relation continued to importune him.

These unfortunate intreaties unhinged the mind of Dunstan. He became agitated by a tumult of contending passions. With the monastic habit were connected a release from the dread of futurity, the reputation and the means of peculiar sanctity, and an impressive empire over the minds of men. But it exacted an abnegation of the raptures of love, of the exquisite delights of a growing family, and of those numerous gratifications with which social life in every age abounds. His health was unequal to the mighty conflict: a dangerous disease attacked him³⁷ before he could decide, and his life was despaired of. He lay without a prospect of recovery, and so senseless, that the pulse of life seemed to have ceased: at last it slowly returned, and life renewed in gradual convalescence. But he rose from the bed of sickness with an altered mind. The terrors of death had affected him, and superstition triumphed. He renounced the flattering world, he assumed the monastic habit, and condemned himself to celibacy.³⁸

³⁶ Osbern, 95.

³⁷ *Eo namque modo turgentium vesicarum dolor intolerabilis omne corpus ipsius obtexit ut elephantinum morbum se pati putaret et spe vitæ propriæ penitus non haberet.* MS. Cleop. Osbern's statement is thus: "Cum igitur his hujusmodi verbis per singulos dies Episcopus insisteret, et Dunstanus aut veris aut verisimillimis rationibus insistentem differret; quadam die vehementer hoc cogitationis

ambiguo pulsatus est, ut quid in vita quam maxime appetendum fuisset, virtus an voluptas, uxor an virginitas, magnopere deliberaret. Quem sub tali ambiguo positum gravissima febris invasit, atque ad desperationem vitæ perduxit. Jacebat itaque sine expectatione salutis ægrotans nec ullum intuentibus viventis sensum præbens." Osb. 96.

³⁸ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osbern, 96.

But to give new directions to our feelings, by the violence of terror, is to produce changes of thought and action, neither salutary to our moral principles, nor calculable in their consequences. Dunstan, while ardent with passions not dishonourable in youth, was driven forcibly from civil honours, and was afterwards excluded from social life. In obedience to duty, fear, and importunity, but in direct contradiction to his own wishes and prospects, he became a monk. Does the incessant experience of human nature teach us to expect that an amiable, benevolent, or virtuous character, would result from these compulsions? Checked in our dearest, and not immoral propensities, are we never soured by the disappointment, never irritated by the injustice? Driven by violence into the schemes of others, will not individuals of strong feelings become artificial characters? harshly coerced themselves, will they not be indurated towards others? Will not selfishness, in all its power of mischief, become the ever-ruling principle? How could Dunstan be expected to regard or contribute to the happiness of others, when all his favourite felicities had been blasted? It is, indeed, true, that exalted virtue will rise superior to such temptations to misanthropy and vice. Many are the glorious minds who have withstood the fiery trial; and whoever loves virtue as he ought, will pursue it unaffected by the follies of man, or the accidents of life. Many, however, fall the victims of their vicissitudes, and Dunstan was of the number.

The predominant passions in Dunstan's character were, impetuosity and ambition. The path of life to which he was forced, did not extinguish these energies, though it may have added moroseness and hard-heartedness. His superior mind and all its acquisitions still remained: but it was necessary that all its peculiarities should thereafter be displayed in the language, garb, and manners of a monk. The aspiring soldier seeks distinction in the field of battle by excelling

courage; the ambitious recluse pursues the phantom in his lonely cell, by extraordinary penances, and a superior superstition. Dunstan had now only this way to fame; and he rushed through it with an impatient earnestness which every year became more unprincipled, and which at last poisoned his mind and injured his contemporaries, but gratified his passion.

He made with his own hands a sort of cave or cell, so unlike any thing of the sort, that his biographer, who had seen it, knew not what to call it.³⁹ It was more like a grave than a human habitation. Cells were commonly dug in an eminence, or raised from the earth: this was the earth itself excavated. It was five feet long and two and a half wide. Its height was the stature of a man standing in the excavation. Its only wall was its door, which covered the whole, and in this was a small aperture to admit light and air.⁴⁰

Such singularities as these reveal the secret purposes of their author's heart. Genuine piety is modest, private, and unaffected. Piety, when assumed as a mask, to cover or to assist inordinate ambition, labours to be ostentatious, absurd, extravagant, and frantically superstitious.

An incident which began his fame, announces the arts by which he gained it. Dunstan carried to his sepulchral cell a fragment of his former disposition. He exercised himself in working on metals. One night all the neighbourhood was alarmed by the most terrific howlings, which seemed to issue from his abode. In the morning they flocked to him to enquire

³⁹ Non enim invenio qua id appellatione quam proxime vocem; cum non tam humani habitaculi quam formam gerat sepulchri, propriis laboribus fabricavit. Osberne, 96.

⁴⁰ Osberne, 96. This author's additional exclamation is worth translating, for its singularity: "Wretch and sinner as I am; I confess that I have seen this holy place of

his residence. I have seen the works of his hands. I have touched them with sinful hands, have brought them to my eyes, watered them with my tears, and adored them with bended knees. I remembered how often he has heard my petitions in my perils, and therefore I did not refrain my tears; nor if I could have avoided it, would I have left the place." Ib.

the cause: he told them the devil had intruded his head into his window to tempt him while he was heating his work; that he had seized him by the nose with his red hot tongs, and that the noise was Satan's roaring at the pain.⁴¹ The simple people venerated the recluse for this amazing exploit, and forgot to recollect that he might himself have made the clamour, to extort their morning wonder at his fabricated tale.

All ages and ranks now united to spread his fame,⁴² and a substantial benefit soon accrued. A noble lady, Ethelfleda, of royal descent, who was passing a quiet life of widowhood, was attracted into his vicinity, was charmed by his conversation, and religiously loved him. She introduced him to the king, who visited her; and what gave him immediately an importance of the most interesting nature, she left him at her death, which happened soon afterwards, the heir of all her wealth.⁴³

It is stated that he distributed his acquisitions among the poor. It may have been so. Such a distribution was promotive of his ambition; for it must have procured him much popularity.

Dunstan's reputation and connection made him known to Edmund, who invited him to court.⁴⁴ He eagerly obeyed. The prospects of his youth began to shine again; but he beheld them with very different feelings. The world, and all its pleasures, would then have been his harvest; but now the narrow path of monastic life was that which he must tread. His creative genius, however, determined to make this track lead him to the highest honours; and he succeeded to his wishes.

At court, though he made many friends, he had also many enemies. Crafty men generally detect and mistrust each other. He surmounted, however, all opposition; for the

⁴¹ Osberne, 96, 97.

⁴² Ibid. 97.

⁴³ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osberne, 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Ibid. 99.

chancellor Turketul supported him,⁴⁵ and the first step of his future aggrandisement was laid by the acquisition of the monastery of Glastonbury, to which he was appointed abbot by the king.⁴⁶

The Benedictine order was creeping into notoriety. Dunstan introduced it into his monastery,⁴⁷ and made himself its most active patron. It became a powerful auxiliary to his ambition.

The new abbot gained so rapidly upon the prejudices of his age, that his youth was no impediment to his aggrandisement. If the year of his birth is truly stated,⁴⁸ he could be only twenty-two at the accession of Edred, and thirty-one at his demise; yet before Edred's coronation, he was made abbot of Glastonbury, and he was afterwards chosen by Edred for his confidential friend and counsellor. To him, this king sent all his choicest treasures, and those amassed by the preceding sovereigns, to be kept in his monastery under his inspection.⁴⁹

The policy of Dunstan was foreseeing and refined. The see of Winchester was offered to him by the king; but he refused it, on the pretence of unfitness. The king intreated his mother to invite him to dinner, and to add her persuasions; but Dunstan declared he could not leave the king, and would not, in his days, even accept the metropolitan honour.⁵⁰

He went home. In the morning he told the king he had seen a vision, in which Saint Peter struck him, and said, "This is your punishment for your refusal, and a token to you not to decline hereafter the primacy of England." The king saw

⁴⁵ Ingulf, 38.

⁴⁶ MS. Cleop. This says, that the king took him to Glastonbury, et apprehensa ejus dextra causa placationis seu etiam dignitatis osculatus est illum. And see Adelard, Nero, C. 7.

⁴⁷ MS. Cleop. MS. Nero; and Osberne. Ingulf says, that Dunstan went to Fleury, to be initiated, p. 29.

⁴⁸ That he was born in the year of Athel-

stan's accession, is declared by Sax. Chron. 111. Flor. 348. Hoveden, 422. Osb. 90.

⁴⁹ Ex hac quippe caritatis fiducia commisit illi rex optima suorum suppellectilium quam plures scilicet rurales cartulas ac etiam veteres precedentium regum thesauros nec non et diversas propriæ adoptionis gazas submunimine monasterii sui fideliter custodiendum. MS. Cleop. B. 13.

⁵⁰ MS. Cleop. B. 13.; Adelard; Nero, C. 7.

not the art of his friend, but interpreting the vision to his wishes, declared that it foretold he was to be the archbishop of Canterbury.⁵¹

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Edwin.

Thus Dunstan, by this incident, acquired the credit of humility, of a divine communication, and a royal prediction of the highest grandeur to which he could attain. It need only be added, that Odo, who then governed the see of Canterbury, was very old.

Edred, who had been ailing all his reign, felt an alarming crisis to be approaching, and desired his treasures to be collected, that he might dispose of them before he died. Dunstan went to bring those intrusted to him. Edred expired before he returned; and the monk was daring enough to assert, and the Anglo-Saxons were credulous enough to believe, that, on the road an ethereal voice had, in thunder, announced to him the royal demise.⁵²

The immature age of Edwin was tempting to a man of Dunstan's politics. A minor's reign was a favourable opportunity not to be neglected. The royal temper once subdued into obedience to the bolder genius of the monk, the government of England would be in his hands. It is probable, that projects of this sort had impressed his imagination, or he would not have attempted to coerce the king so early as the day of his coronation.

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On this day, Edwin, after the ceremony, quitted the festive table at which the chief nobles and clergy were regaling,⁵³ and retired to his apartments. Odo, who saw that the company were displeased, ordered some persons to go and bring back the king to partake of their conviviality.⁵⁴ The persons ad-

⁵¹ Osberne, 103. Adelard.

⁵² MS. Cleop.; Adelard; Nero.

⁵³ The earliest account of this incident is first entitled to notice; it is in the life of Dunstan, Cleop. B. 13. "Post regale sacræ institutionis unguentum repente prosiluit lascivus linquens læta convivia." Malmesbury wishes to intimate, that affairs of business were debating when the king retired, p. 55. But the other authorities agree in stating,

that they were at table. Matt. West. says, læta relinquit convivia, p. 369. Osberne has, jam pransus; and Wallingford declares that they were at their cups, quibus Angli nimis sunt assueti, p. 542.

⁵⁴ Et cum vidisset summus pontifex Odo regis petulantiam maxime in consecrationis suæ die omni per gyrum considenti senatui displicere, ait coepiscopis suis et cæteris principibus. Eant quæso quilibet ex vobis

dressed excused themselves; but at last they chose two who were known to be the most intrepid—Dunstan, and his relation Cynesius, a bishop—who were to bring back the king, either willingly or otherwise, to his deserted seat.⁵⁵

Dunstan and his friend, careless of the consequences, penetrated to the king's private apartments. He found him in company with Ethelgiva, or Elgiva, his wife; but who being within the prohibited degrees of affinity, is ranked, by the monastic writers, as his mistress.⁵⁶ The mother of the lady was also present.⁵⁷ That in a visit to the beloved of his heart, the king should lay aside the pomp of majesty, is a circumstance so natural, that we cannot but wonder at the malice which so emphatically described, that the royal crown was on the ground⁵⁸ when Dunstan entered. He told the king that the nobles expected him back to the festivities of the day.⁵⁹

Whether Edwin disliked the drunkenness of an Anglo-Saxon festival, or whether he coveted the society of his Elgiva, it must be admitted that his retirement was indecorous according to the customs of the age. That Dunstan, as the ambassador of the nobles, should solicit the king's return, was not improper, though it seems rather a forward and disrespectful action to have forced himself into his private apartments. But with the delivery of their message, his commission must have terminated; and, on the king's refusal, it was his duty to have

ad reducendum regem quò sit, ut conducet in hoc regali convivio suorum satellitum jocundus consessor. MSS. Cleop.

⁵⁵ Ad extremum vero eligerunt ex omnibus duos quos animo constantissimos noverrant Dunstanum scilicet Abbatem et Cynesium episcopum ejus consanguineum ut omnium jussui obtemperantes regem volentem vel nolentem reducerent ad relictam sedem. MSS. Cleop. On contrasting this account with the chroniclers, some variation of the circumstances occurs, which is a very common accident to a popular story, narrated in a distant age. It seems safest to prefer the earliest account, when it carries the marks of internal probability.

⁵⁶ Malmesbury, 55. Hist. Rames. 390; and Wallingford, 543. speak of her as married to Edwin, but as his relation.

⁵⁷ MSS. Cleop. B. 13. Matt. West. 369; and Osberne, 105. state this important fact. The indecent additions of the two first authors seem to me to merit only contempt, more especially as the MS. Cleop. quits the firm phrase of certain history to introduce them with a suspicious "ut aiunt."

⁵⁸ By this contemporary author of the MS. Cleop. the crown is thus described: Que miro metallo auri vel argenti gemmarum que vario nitore conserta splendebat.

⁵⁹ Et ne spernas optimatum tuorum lætis interesse convivus. MSS. Cleop.

retired. As an ecclesiastic, he should not have compelled him to a scene of inebriety ; as a subject, it was treasonable to offer violence to his prince.

CHAP.

V.

Edwin.

955.

But Dunstan chose to forget both Edwin's rights as a man, and his dignity as a sovereign. As if he had embraced the daring occasion to break the royal spirit of independence, by a violent insult, he poured out his invectives against the ladies ; and because the king would not leave his seat, he pulled him from it ; he forced the diadem on his head, and indecently dragged him to the riotous hall.⁶⁰ To the most private individual this insolence would have been unauthorized. To his sovereign, just consecrated, it was unpardonable. Elgiva reproached the monk for intruding so daringly on the king's retirement ;⁶¹ and Dunstan, after the festival, thought proper to return to his abbey.

Dunstan had played desperately his game of ambition, but he was foiled. The king was not a sickly Edred. He displayed a spirit of independence and generous feeling, on which Dunstan had not calculated. Wounded in every sentiment of becoming pride and kingly honour, Edwin was alive only to his resentment. He deprived Dunstan of his honours and wealth, and condemned him to banishment. Dunstan fled before the increasing storm ; and so severe was the royal indignation, that the monk was scarcely three miles from the shore, on his voyage to Flanders, when messengers reached it, who, it was said, would have deprived him of sight, if he had been found in the country.⁶²

⁶⁰ At Dunstanus primum increpitans mulierum ineptias mane sua dum nollet exsurge, extraxit eum de mæchali genearum occultu imposito que diademate duxit eum secum licet vi a mulieribus raptum ad regale consortium. MS. Cleop. Malmsbury, 55. Osberne, 105. Wallingford, 542. and Matt. West. 370. state the violence strongly.

⁶¹ MSS. Cleop. This author, and Adelard, Nero, C. 7. politely attach to the lady's name such epithets, as impudens virago, Jezabel, &c. Osberne uses the delicate phrase

of, nefandæ meretricis, and sagaciously informs us, that the devil was her tutor, " Mulieris animum instigat Diabolus," p. 105.

⁶² MS. Cleop. Edwin drove the Benedictine monks, introduced by Dunstan, from the two monasteries of Glastonbury and Abbingdon. The loose language of Osberne implies, that many monasteries were put down ; but Wharton, on the authority of John of Tinmouth and Wolstan, judiciously reduces the many to these two.

It was unfortunate for Edwin, that he suffered his angry passions to be his counsellors. When Dunstan presumed to dictate insultingly to his sovereign, he was not the mere abbot of a distant monastery; he was not an insulated individual, whom the arm of justice could safely reach; he was enshrined in the prejudices of the people, whom his bold artifices had deluded and attached; he had the friendship of Turketul, the venerable chancellor, whose fame had become more sacred by his retreat to Croyland; and he was supported by Odo, the primate of England. It was also probable, that most of the clergy and nobles, who had feasted on the coronation, conceived themselves bound to protect him, as his punishment arose from executing, however offensively, their commission.

The detail of the conspiracy against Edwin is not stated, but some of the operations of Odo, whose fierce temper made him among the most prominent in avenging his friend, have been noticed. He divorced the king from his wife, on the plea of their kinship.⁶³ So powerful was his party, that he dared to send soldiers to the palace to seize his queen: he caused her face to be branded with red hot iron, and banished her to Ireland.⁶⁴ What duty of an archbishop could dictate this conduct? Elgiva found no charms in her exile, and, nature healing her wounds, she returned to Gloucester in all her beauty.⁶⁵ Odo's fiends there pursued her. They seized her, and—horrible to relate—it is their own panegyrists who exultingly tell the story—they cut the nerves and muscles of her legs, that she might wander from their vengeance no more!⁶⁶

⁶³ The MS. Saxon Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. has a paragraph on Edwin's divorce, which is not in the printed one: "958, on thyssum geare Oda arcebiscop totwæmde Eadwi cyn- ing 7 Ælgyfe for tham the hi wæron to gesybbe."

⁶⁴ Missis militibus, a curia regis in qua mansitabat, violenter adduxit et eam in facie deturpatam ac candenti ferro denotatam perpetua in Hiberniam exilii relegatione detruxit. Osberne, 84.

⁶⁵ Quæ tamen cum nonnullum temporis

intervallum jam obducta in cicatricem corporis forma sed adhuc hiant impudicæ mentis deformitate, relictâ Hibernia, Angliam rediit et Glocestram cæcati cordis obscuritate imbuta pervenit. Osberne, 84.

⁶⁶ Ubi ab hominibus servis Dei comprehensa, et ne meretricio more ulterius vaga discurreret, subnervata, post dies aliquot mala morte præsentis vitæ sublata est. Osb. 84. He adds, I suppose in justification of this inhuman act, a description of the prelate's sternness of character towards vice.

But extreme cruelty cannot long retain its victim. Her sufferings at last terminated. Death released her from her murderers, whom no beauty could interest, no sympathy assuage.

CHAP.

V.

Edwin.

955.

To reflect that men have connected piety with these horrors; that they were perpetrated under His sacred name, whose creation displays goodness ever flowing, and whose religion enjoins philanthropy the most benign, is to feel human nature in all its depravity and madness. They may have been imitated. Marats and Robespierres may have even exceeded them in atrocity; but the agents of cruelty, under whatever garb, whatever system, or whatever pretexts, are the enemies of mankind, and will never be remembered, unless to be abhorred.

The miseries of Elgiva did not satiate their fury. Odo and his partisans could tyrannize over the king, but they did not subdue, though they exasperated his spirit. It remained then to dethrone him. The Mercians and Northumbrians rebelled against him, drove him beyond the Thames, and appointed Edgar, his brother, a boy but thirteen years of age, to govern them in his stead. Dunstan was afterwards recalled with honour.

It is probable that the popularity of the Benedictine reformation, of which Dunstan had made himself both the champion and the martyr, was the great engine by which Edwin was oppressed. In directing this against the king, Dunstan kept from public notice his personal quarrel. His hostility even seemed the exertions of virtue and reason, labouring to suppress immorality, and to divest it of the kingly favour. Dunstan found abundance of supporters; and the revolutions he patronized, gathered strength every day.

Edwin disdained to bend to the raging storm, and was overwhelmed by it. Three years after the rebellion of his subjects, he was no more. One author even states, that he was

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assassinated.⁶⁷ If the evidence be not sufficient to impress this opinion, we must at least believe the affecting account, that his spirit was so wounded by his persecutions, that, unable to endure unmerited odium, deprivation of power, a brother's rebellion, and the murder of his beloved wife, he sunk pining into death, before he had reached the full age of manhood.⁶⁸

The monks, with indefinite phrase, declaim against Edwin as an unworthy voluptuary. Yet if truth had sanctified their charge, compassion would have remembered his sufferings, and have been silent. But it is difficult to controul our sensibility, when we read in some writers that he was an amiable prince, whose conduct gave the promise of an honourable reign.⁶⁹

His youth was the source of his calamities; a king of sixteen was incompetent to wage a war of policy and popularity with the hoary advocates of a new system, whose fanaticism envenomed their hostility, whose affiliation and credit multiplied their power. The opinions of a calumniated and untried youth had no weight with the nation, in opposition to all that they

⁶⁷ I derive the knowledge of this new and probable fact from the express assertion of an old MS. Chronicle in the Cotton Library, the author of which was no friend to the king. Yet he says, Rex West Saxonum Edwinus, in pago Gloucestrensi interfectus fuit. Nero, A. 6. p. 9. I never met with any other authority which so explicitly affirmed the fact. But yet the expressions of the MS. Cleop. B. 13. rather countenance it. This says, "Interea germanus ejusdem Eadgari qui justa Dei sui judicia deviando dereliquit novissimum flatum *misera morte* exspiravit." Osberne comes near this: Edwyo inquam rege regno pro suis criminibus *eliminato et misera morte* damnato," p. 84. The Hist. Rames. implies a violent death: "Fatali sorte sublato." p. 393.

⁶⁸ Pro dolore tanti infortunii usque ad mortem infirmatus. Ingulf, 41. Qua percussus injuria vivendi finem fecit. Malmsb. 55.

⁶⁹ The simple epithet of the ancient Ethelwerd is peculiarly forcible: "Tenuit namque

quadrennio per regnum *amandus*," p. 849. Huntingdon had also spirit enough to declare that Edwin, "*Non illaudabiliter regni infulam tenuit*," p. 356. He adds, that as, "in principio regnum ejus decentissime floreret, prospera et lætabunda exordia mors immatura perrupit." Ib. To the same purport, and with an imitation of phrase, Oxenedes says, "Cum in principio regni sui omnia prospera et lætabunda florerent exordia." MSS. Cotton Lib. Nero, D. 2. p. 215.—Edwin, from his extreme beauty, obtained the name Παγκκλον, or All Fair. Ethelw. 849.

I am not satisfied that the charters in the Hist. Abbend. MSS. Cotton Lib. Claudius, C. 9. are genuine. If they are, one confirms the fact of the MS. Chronicle, which shews that Elgiva was the wife of Edwin; and also decides her name and her mother's; for it says, "Testes autem fuerunt hujus commutationis Ælfgiva regis uxor et Æthelgifa mater ejus." Claud. C. 9. p. 112.

revered and obeyed. Had he complied a little with the imperious necessity, and waited till, by manly prudence, he had acquired character, enforced habits of respect, and created friends capable of defending him, his ambitious dictators would have been baffled and humiliated.

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V.

Edwin.

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His catastrophe was a misfortune to Europe. It gave terror to the enmity of the ecclesiastical power. It exhibited a precedent auspicious to unchristian ambition, of a king insulted, injured, persecuted, and dethroned by sacerdotal enmity; and as his successor bent the humble and flattering slave of the monastic leaders, it must have given a consequence to their influence, which operated powerfully to subject even courts to their control.

BOOK

VI.

Edwin.

959.

CHAP. VI.

The Reign of Edgar.

BOOK

VI.

Edgar.

959.

EDGAR, aged sixteen, succeeded to the throne, which his conduct had contributed to make vacant. The boyish age at which he was seduced into his power, transfers the crime of its acquisition to the agents who prompted it.

Edgar was rather the king of a great nation in a fortunate æra, than a great prince himself. His actions display a character ambiguous and mixed. His policy sometimes breathes a liberal and enlarged spirit. He was oftener mean, arrogant, and vicious; and the hyperboles of praise, by which monastic gratitude has emblazoned him, are as repugnant to truth, as to common sense and good taste.¹ On the whole, if we recollect what he inherited, we must say that it was the fortuitous chronology of his existence, rather than his own bravery and wisdom, which has adorned his name with a celebrity, that in the pages of fanaticism even obscures by its excess those illustrious characters from whose exertions his empire had arisen.²

Seated unjustly upon a brother's throne by vindictive monks, his reign became their reign rather than his own. Dunstan, not Edgar, was the monarch of England in the chief part of his life; and the sublime policy of the government was to convert the clergy into monks, and to fill the nation with Benedictine institutions!

¹ For instance. Eo namque regnante sol videbatur esse serenior, maris unda pacatior, terra fecundior, et totius regni facies abundantior, decore venustior. Ethelr. Abb. Riev. 359.

² Malmsbury is not content with saying once, that nullus enim unquam regum Anglo-

rum potuit certare laudibus Edgari, 3 Gale, 319.; but in another place he deliberately affirms, that, nullum nec ejus nec superioris ætatis regem in Anglia recto et æquilibrî judicio Edgario comparandum. De Gest. Reg. 60. Was not Alfred, in just and equal judgment, to be compared with Edgar?

In patronising the Benedictine rule, Odo may have intended well, though his stern temper added a ferocity to his virtue, which changed it into sanguinary vice. But the current of Dunstan's life authorizes us to affirm, that he embraced it as a popular instrument of his unmeasured ambition. The policy was obvious. Could he succeed in ejecting the regular clergy from the monasteries, and fill them with the votaries of the new rule, his power would be ramified into every part of England, and be every where rooted in the hearts of men, whose existence sprang from him, and could continue but by his support. The people, induced to reverence the new monks for their assumed sanctity and severe regularity, would be subject to their influence. Thus the crafty project ended in governing the nation by the new order of which every member was, by gratitude, interest, and prejudice, attached to Dunstan as its founder and patron. He obtained the full profit which he sought. He was the sovereign of England while he lived, and he was sanctified, after his death, by enthusiasm so frantic, that superstition seldom gave the Deity more adoration than it offered up to Dunstan.

Dunstan was made bishop of Worcester, and afterwards of London.³ His acquisition of metropolitan honours was at first checked. Odo had died before Edwin;⁴ and this indignant king appointed another bishop to succeed him. But the artful policy of the Roman pontiffs had established a custom, that all metropolitans should visit Rome to receive there the pallium, the little ornament on their shoulders, which gave and announced their dignity.

In crossing the Alps, the archbishop nominated by Edwin perished amid the snow.⁵ Another was appointed in his stead. But Edgar now reigned, and Dunstan discovered that the new dignitary was a man of mild, modest, humble, and

³ MS. Cleop. B. 13. Osb. 108. He seems to have held both sees at the same time.

⁴ Odo died 958. Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355.

⁵ MSS. Cleop. B. 13. So Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355.

benign temper,⁶ and therefore too much the real Christian to do what was requisite. The expected consequence occurred: Byrhtelm was compelled to abdicate his promotion, and to retire to his former see, and Dunstan was appointed the primate of the Anglo-Saxons.⁷ He did not blush to accept the dignity which his arts had extorted; and, in 960, he hastened to Rome.⁸ He received the completing honour from the hands of a man as ambitious and as unprincipled, but less hypocritical than himself. John the Twelfth conferred on Dunstan the papal ratification.⁹

Dunstan's next step was to secure coadjutors. Oswald, a Dane by birth, and a kinsman of Odo, who had educated him, had received the habit at Fleury. He was therefore qualified to be the auxiliary of Dunstan,¹⁰ who represented him to the king as a meek and humble monk, well worthy of the bishopric of Worcester.¹¹ The king, though he had allowed meekness and humility to degrade a metropolitan, pliantly admitted them to be the proper virtues of a bishop, and gave to Oswald the honour requested. Oswald was, however, not more attached to the amiable virtues than his patron, and suffered none of them to disgrace his name, or to interrupt his interest.

Three years afterwards, Dunstan raised another ally to the see of Winchester, Athelwold, abbot of Abingdon, a man bred up by himself,¹² and of a temper to execute all his schemes. These three the king made his counsellors and friends.¹³

The arts of Dunstan to perpetuate his power and popularity cannot at this distant period be detailed, but they may be conjectured by one faculty which he claimed, and which has been transmitted to us from his own authority. This was his

⁶ MSS. Cleop. So Matt. West. 371. who seems often to copy this author.

⁷ Matt. West. 369. Flor. 355. Such was his cupidity of power, that he held also the see of Rochester. Osb. 110.

⁸ Matt. West. 370. Flor. 356.

⁹ That John XII. ruled at this period, see

Dupin, tenth century, p. 10.

¹⁰ Hist. Rames. 391.

¹¹ Flor. Wig. 356.

¹² Flor. 357. So Adelard says, "Beato igitur Athelwoldo a se educato." MS. Nero, C. 7. p. 75.

¹³ See Edgar's charter, Dugdale, 140.

power of conversing with the spiritual world. "I can relate one thing from himself," says his biographer, "that though he lived confined by a veil of flesh, yet whether awake or asleep, he was always abiding with the powers above."¹⁴ Hence he learnt many heavenly songs. A particular instance is added of a vision, which announces such intrepidity of impudence in Dunstan, and childish credulity in his countrymen, that if it had not come from a friend and a contemporary, it might demand our disbelief.

In this vision, he declared he saw his own mother married to the venerated Saviour of the Christian world, with every nuptial pomp.¹⁵ Amid the singing, a heavenly youth asked Dunstan, why he did not join in the rejoicings of so great a marriage for his mother; and, on his mentioning his ignorance, taught him a song.¹⁶

Dunstan promulgated this by summoning a monk to attend him on his pretended waking, who, from his dictation, committed the song to writing. All the monks, subject to him, were commanded in the morning to learn and to sing it, while Dunstan shouted his protestations of the truth of the vision.¹⁷

To the credulous, the assertion of Dunstan was sufficient evidence of this impious falsehood. The more investigating were silenced by attempts to allegorise it. The mother so married, was Dunstan's church in its new reformation.¹⁸ Thus, whether it was believed literally, or interpreted allegorically, Dunstan derived from it the benefit he wished. It would seem that many thought him mad; but as his madness was systematic, persevering, and popular, it was soon recognised to be prophetic intuition.¹⁹

¹⁴ Unum autem *ex ipso* me posse referre profiteor quod quamvis hic carneo septus velamine deguisset in imis mente tamen sive vigilaret sive somno detentus quiescerat semper manebat in superis. MS. Cleop. B. 13. p. 81.

¹⁵ MS. Cleop. and see Osbern, 114. and Eadmer Vit. Dunst. 217.

¹⁶ MSS. Cleop.

¹⁷ Sed continuo jussit eam litterarum in memoria priusque oblivioni daretur conscribere et conscriptam cuidam monacho tam recentem discere, &c. &c. MSS. Cleop.

¹⁸ MSS. Cleop.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The first object of Dunstan was to expel the clergy from the monasteries, to diffuse every where the Benedictine rule, and to give them the predominance in the estimation of the nation.

But Edgar did not leave his Benedictine friends to oppress the clergy by their influence and means of aggression. He degraded majesty so far as to become himself the persecuting tool of Dunstan. He himself assumed the sword against a portion of his subjects,²¹ who were respectable from their profession, and who could have no protection, but in the popular favour, or in his justice.

At a public synod, convened to propagate the Benedictine revolution, Edgar delivered a speech²² for the party he espoused. In consequence of which, the clergy experienced a general persecution, and the monks were every where diffused with honour.²³ Edgar took such pride in his Benedictine fury, that, in 964, he boasted of having made forty-seven monasteries, and declared his intentions to increase them to fifty.²⁴

Edgar talks proudly, in one of his charters, that he had subdued all the islands of the ocean, with their ferocious kings, as far as Norway, and the greatest part of Ireland, with its most noble city, Dublin.²⁵ No wars, however, have been stated to have been waged by him but his ecclesiastical, except an invasion of Wales.²⁶

To complete the subjugation of Northumbria, he convoked

²¹ In his charta to the monastery at Hyde, in the year 966, he says: "Vitiorum cuneos canonicorum e diveris nostri regiminis Cænobiis Christi vicarius eliminavi." Spelman Concil. 438. In the sixteenth article the monks are engaged to defend him from devils, and in the seventeenth he contracts to defend them from men. Ib. 440.

²² See it in Ethelred, p. 360.

²³ See Spelman's Concilia, 479; Ingulf, 45; Osbern, 111; Eadmer, 219; Hoveden,

425; Matt. West. 372, 374. and Hist. Rames. 393, 394, 400.

²⁴ See Dugdale, Monast. 1. p. 140.

²⁵ Mihi autem concessit propitia divinitas cum Anglorum imperio omnia regna insularum oceanicum suis ferocissimis regibus usque Norregiam maximam que partem Hiberniæ cum sua nobilissima civitate Dublinia Anglorum regno subjugare. 1 Dugdale, 140.

²⁶ Caradoc mentions this in 965. and says, it produced the Welsh tribute of 300 wolves, p. 56.

the barons, and divided the province into two counties. The Tees was the river of separation. The districts beyond its southern bank to the Humber were intrusted to Oslach. From the northern bank to Mereforth, in the maritime part of Deira, the earl Eadulf governed.²⁷

It is stated, that with a great fleet Edgar sailed to Chester on the Dee, and that eight kings, Kenneth king of Scotland, Malcolm of Cumbria, Macchus of Anglesey and the Isles,²⁸ three kings of Wales, and two others,²⁹ repaired thither at his command, to do him homage. He was not satisfied with this confession of his power; his puerile vanity demanded a more painful sacrifice; he ascended a large vessel with his nobles and officers; and he stationed himself at the helm, while the eight kings, who had come to do him honour, were compelled to take the seats of the watermen, and to row him down the Dee.³⁰ Such actions are not the evidences of true greatness, and never confer a lasting dignity.

973.

Edgar was as tyrannical in the indulgence of his other passions: he had sent Athelwold on a visit to Ordgar, earl of Devonshire, to examine if the beauty of his daughter, Elfrida, was as great as fame reported. Athelwold saw her,

²⁷ Wallingford, 544.

²⁸ Matt. West. 375. so intitles him, "Maccone rege Monæ et plurimarum insularum." Malmsbury calls him Archipirata, p. 56. In 971, he witnessed one of Edgar's charters, with that epithet added to his signature. Spelman, 486. Who this Macchus was we learn from the Welsh Chronicle, often already quoted. This says, 969, "y diffeithwyd Penn Mon y gan y Paganyeit a Mact' vab Harald." "The promontory of Anglesey was ravaged by the Pagans under Mactus the son of Harald." In 970, he made it tributary. MS. Cleop. B. 5. On referring to Adam Bremenensis, p. 25. we find two lines which express that Harald Blaatand, king of Denmark, sent his son Hring to England, who having conquered the island, was betrayed in Northumbria. So the Icelandic fragment in Langbeck, 2. p. 148. I have already, in p. 370. stated from Snorre, the death of Eric, son of

Harald Harfragre, whom Langbeck wishes to make this Hring or Hringr, son of the Danish king. I think Snorre is correct, and that Adam and Langbeck have confounded the sons of the two Haralds. The Welsh Chronicle rectifies the mistake. The son of Harald Blaatand, who was on the English coast, was Mactus. He conquered Anglesey. He did homage to Edgar. Wallingford spells his name Oriccus, p. 545. which comes nearer to Hring or Hringr.

²⁹ Matt. West. styles these, Jacobo rege Galwalliæ et Jukil Westmariæ, p. 375.

³⁰ Malmsb. 56. Mailros, 150. Hoveden, 426. Sim. Dun. 159. AL. Bev. 112. Flor. 359. Nothing can more strongly display Edgar's vanity than the pompous and boastful titles which he assumes in his charters. They sometimes run to the length of fifteen or eighteen lines. How different from Alfred's Ego occidentalium Saxonum Rex!

and falsified his trust. He reported her unfavourably to the king, then courted her for himself, and married her.

Courtiers are busy to supplant, and Edgar soon heard the truth. He dissembled his anger, and announced to Athelwold his intention to see the lady. Alarmed at his danger, the nobleman intreated his wife to deform herself; but Elfrida was weary of domestic privacy, and, on the day of the royal visit, she added every charm of art to give brilliancy to her beauty. She excited Edgar's passions. He caused Athelwold to be assassinated in a wood, and then married Elfrida.³¹

At another time he had the brutality to violate a lady of noble birth, who used a nun's veil as an expected, but an un-availing, protection.³²

A third incident of his contempt for the welfare of others, when his own gratification was in question, has been recorded.

Visiting at Andover, he commanded a nobleman to bring him his daughter, whose person had been praised to him. The mother of the young lady, resolved not to ruin every hope of life, and all the promises of virtue, for the transient humour of an immoral tyrant, sent her attendant to personate her daughter. Such a fraud was, however, rather a compromise with her maternal feelings, than an act of judicious virtue; for she ought not to have vilified another. Darkness permitted the deceit; the morning revealed it. The king attached himself to her till he met Elfrida.³³

For these actions Dunstan imposed trifling penances on Edgar;³⁴ a circumstance which gives further evidence to the

³¹ Malmsb. 59. Bromton gives the incident more in detail, 865, 866.

³² Malmsb. 60. This was in his first wife's time. Eadmer Vit. Dunst. 219.

³³ Malmsb. 60. This author's expressions, *nam cæteras infamias—magis resperserunt cantilenæ*, p. 56. imply, that the Anglo-

Saxon poets made Edgar's dissolute conduct the subject of their poetry.

³⁴ As occasional fasting, and not to wear his crown for seven years. Malmsb. 60. Osb. 111. One part of the penance was artfully chosen to promote the monk's purposes. The king was to lavish his treasures upon a nunnery, to expel the clergy with new vigour, and to introduce monks. Osb.

inference, that he punished in Edwin, not his censured marriage, but his aversion to gratify the monk's ambition.

Yet amid these defects, some traits of an enlarged and liberal policy appear, which reflect credit on Edgar or his ministers. The most important of these was his patronage of foreigners and trade. People from Saxony, Flanders, and Denmark, frequently came to him;³⁵ whom he received so well as to excite a censure from the monkish chroniclers, that he loved them too much,³⁶ and from another, that they injured his people by the vices they imported.³⁷ He shewed his care of trade by his exemplary punishment of the people of Thanet, who had seized and plundered some merchants coming from York.³⁸ His commuting the tribute from Wales into three hundred wolves heads,³⁹ in order to extirpate these animals from the country, was a scheme of sound wisdom and generous policy. His reformation of his coin was also intelligent. It had become so diminished in weight, by the fraud of clipping, that the actual value was very inferior to the nominal; he therefore had new coins made all over England.⁴⁰

He is said to have stationed three fleets of 1,200 ships each on the east, west, and south coasts of the island, for the defence

CHAP.
VI.
Edgar.

973.

³⁵ Malmsb. 56. The Welsh Chronicle. MS. Cleop. B. 5. says: "Canys canneat agavas gwyr Denmarc ar drigaw yn yr ynys honn tra vynynt y gan Edgar vrenhin Lloegyr."—Because to the men of Denmark leave was granted by Edgar king of England, on their request, to dwell in this island.

³⁶ Extraneos huc adductos plus æquo diligens. Hunt. 356.

³⁷ Malmsbury says: "A Saxonibus animorum inconditam ferocitatem, a Flandritis corporum enervem mollitiem, a Danis potationem discerent. Homines ante hac in talibus integri et naturali simplicitate sua defendere, aliena non mirari," p. 56. The Welsh Chronicle adds to the last passage quoted another, which states, that the Danes became so numerous, that they were in every city and town in England; that they gave themselves up to such drinking and idolatry,

that they could not be governed; and that this occasioned nails to be put in their cups, to mark the quantity they were to drink. MS. Cleop. B. 5. Malmsbury says of Dunstan, that he caused silver or gold nails to be put into the drinking vessels, to prevent drunkenness and quarrels, p. 56.

³⁸ Matt. West. 374.

³⁹ Malmsbury says, the tribute ceased on the fourth year, for want of wolves, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Matt. West. 375. Dunstan may have influenced him in this law; for it is stated in his life, that finding three coiners of false money not punished on the appointed day, because it was Whitsunday, he ordered the day not to be regarded; "for," said he, "coiners are thieves, and I know of no thieves more harmful. They disturb the country, and injure both rich and poor." Eadmer, p. 216.

of the kingdom.⁴¹ This, however, looks more like idle parade than public utility; for England was threatened with no foreign hostility in his reign, and one third of the number would have guarded the coast. There was more true glory obtained by his practice, every spring and winter, of riding through his provinces, to examine the conduct of the powerful, to protect the weak, and to punish every violation of law.⁴² This attention to the wants and relief of his people merits our applause, and whether Dunstan's solicitude for popularity,⁴³ or the king's noble feelings occasioned the custom, it ought not to be mentioned without high praise. His vigilant police freed the kingdom from robbers.⁴⁴

Edgar was generous to his friends. To Kenneth of Scotland, who visited him, he not only gave the county of Louth, but one hundred ounces of pure gold, many silken ornaments, and rings, with precious stones.⁴⁵

The person of Edgar was small and thin; and Kenneth one day remarked, that it was wonderful that so many provinces should obey a man so insignificant. These words were carried to the king. He led Kenneth apart into a wood, and bad him take one of two swords which he produced. "Our arms shall decide which ought to obey the other; for it will be base to have asserted that at a feast, which you cannot support with your sword." Kenneth, confused, recollected his hasty remark, and apologized for it as a joke.⁴⁶ There is such an energy and a magnanimity in this incident, that if Edgar had attained his power at a later age, he might have displayed a nobler character.

⁴¹ Mailros, 150. Matt. West. makes 4,800 ships, by adding a Northern fleet. Perhaps either number is an exaggeration. Malmsbury says, that every Easter they sailed round the island, p. 59.

⁴² Malmsb. 59. Mailros, 150. Matt. West. 375.

⁴³ After Dunstan had become a metropolitan, he hastened to travel through every city in the kingdom, to preach to it; and such

was his acuteness and eloquence, says his biographer, that nothing could be wiser, or more pleasant. Osbern, 110.

⁴⁴ Malmsb. 59.

⁴⁵ Matt. West. says, Louth was given on condition that Kenneth should come every year to Edgar's principal feasts. The king gave him several houses for his entertainment during his journey.

⁴⁶ Malmsb. 59.

Edgar was twice married. By his first wife, Elfleda the Fair, daughter of Ordmer, he had Edward, his successor, and a daughter, who became a nun. Elfrida, whom he had made the widow of Athelwold,⁴⁷ who had deceived him, bore him two sons; Edmund, who died before him; and Ethelred, who also obtained the crown.

Edgar's reign has been celebrated as the most glorious of all the Anglo-Saxon kings. No other sovereign indeed converted his prosperity into such personal pomp; and no other sovereign was more degraded in his posterity. With his short life, for he died at thirty-two, the gaudy pageantry ceased; and all the dominion in which he had so ostentatiously exulted, vanished from his children's grasp. His eldest son perished by the scheme of his beloved Elfrida; his youngest reigned only to shew, that one weak reign is sufficient to ruin, even a brave and great people.

Edgar made kings his watermen. The son of his love five times bought his kingdom from Danish rovers, was the fool of traitors, and surrendered his throne to a foreign invader. Of Edgar's grandsons, one perished violently soon after his accession. The other was the last of his race who ruled the Anglo-Saxon nation.

⁴⁷ The Saxon Chron. MS. Tib. B. 4. dates Edgar's marriage with Elfrida in 965.

C H A P. VII.

Edward the Martyr, or Edward the Second of the Anglo-Saxon Kings.

BOOK
VI.
Edward
the Martyr.
975.

DUNSTAN had used the power of Edgar to plant England with the new monks, and to exclude from their seats the ancient clergy; but he had not reconciled all the nation to the severity of the measure, or to his own administration; for on Edgar's death an attempt was made to humble his power, and to restore the clergy. As Edward appeared subservient to the views of Dunstan, his accession was disputed. Some chose him, and others Ethelred.¹ But Edward had been named by his father as successor, and Dunstan took, as usual, the shortest road to his object. He and Oswald assembled their ecclesiastical friends and some Dukes, and crowned Edward.² Edward, like all the kings since Athelstan, was very young at his accession.

The quarrel between the two systems grew more vehement. The governor of Mercia turned out all the monks.³ The governor of East Anglia supported them.⁴ Many tumults ensued.⁵ The clergy got hold of the monastic possessions, which they distributed to the governors in return for their protection.⁶

Elfrida was as ambitious as Dunstan, and therefore became his rival. She joined the party of the clergy, and endeavoured to bias the minds of the great in favour of her son Ethelred.

¹ Flor. Wig. 361. Mailros, 151.

² Hist. Rames. 413. Mailros, 151. Eadmer, Vit. D. 220.

³ Ingulf, 54. Malmsb. 61.

⁴ Hist. Rames. 412.

⁵ Multus inde tumultus in omni angulo Angliæ factus est. Ingulf, 54.

⁶ Ingulf, 54. One author says, he cannot express the sufferings of the monks. Hist. Rames. 412.

Though Dunstan had got Edward crowned, he could not recover the alienated minds of the nobility. He attempted to govern them by the influence of superstition. He forcibly expelled the clergy, who had been reinstated; and to quiet the discontents at his violence, he convened a synod at Winchester. While the opinions were forming, and the assembly expected his answer to a peculiar appeal which had been made to him, the crucifix in the wall became vocal. It commended the former proceedings: it forbade a change. "What wish ye more?" exclaimed Dunstan, immediately; "the divine voice determines the affair."

CHAP.
VII.
Edward
the Martyr.
975.

As Dunstan's character and modes of operation were becoming better appretiated, this artifice did not fully succeed. Irritated at the failure, and dreading the loss of that power for whose acquisition he had already dared and perpetrated so much, he had recourse to a scheme of the most atrocious nature. He had found their minds somewhat difficult of impression. He resolved to attempt their lives. A council of the nobles was summoned at Calne. It was managed that the king should be absent, on account of his age. While the senators of England were conversing unsuspectingly on the question then agitated, and were reproaching Dunstan, he gave a short reply, which ended with these remarkable words: "I confess that I am unwilling to be overcome. I commit the cause of the church to the decision of Christ."

As these words were uttered, the floor and all its beams and rafters gave way, and precipitated the company with the ruins to the earth below. The seat of Dunstan only was unmoved. Many of the nobles were killed upon the spot; the others were grievously hurt by wounds, which kept them long confined.⁸ If no other achievement had revealed Dunstan's character, or

⁷ Malmsb. 61. Bromton, 870. Gervase, 1647. Osberne, 112. Eadmer, 219. The two latter place it under Edgar's reign, which is less probable than the chronology of the others, because Edgar's attachment to Dunstan and power, made such aids useless.

⁸ Malmsb. 61. Flor. Wig. 361. Sim. Dun. 160.

covered him with infamy, this would have sufficed ; but it was only a part of that system of fraud, ambition, and iniquity, which continued to mark his life from the time of his turning monk.

Perhaps imposture was never more impudent than in the management of Dunstan. On the death of his friend and pupil Athelwold, the see of Winchester became vacant. As, from the dissatisfaction of the nobles, his power began to tremble, it became expedient that he should guard it by filling every high office with his friends. He fixed upon Elphegus as the successor, and, to abolish all opposition, he boldly declared, that Saint Andrew had appeared to him, and commanded him to consecrate Elphegus to the vacant see.⁹

Such proceedings at last taught others to fight him with the weapons of crime. The subjection of Edward to his will gave a perpetuity to his power ; but it happened that there was a person existing as ambitious as himself, and as indifferent to the means of gratifying that ambition. This was Elfrida. I know not whether we can credit all the wickedness attributed to her. It is stated in the records of the abbey of Ely, that its first abbot, Brithonod, was seen by Elfrida in the New Forest. He went to the royal court on the business of his church, and at his departure took leave also of her. She desired a private conversation with him on affairs of conscience, and in the interview she acted the wife of Potiphar. The abbot emulated the virtue of Joseph ; and the disappointed Elfrida procured his assassination. The power of the queen dowager compelled his monastery to indulge their suspicions in silence ; but in her days of penitence she acknowledged the crime.¹⁰

It is also declared of Elfrida, that Edward gave her all Dorsetshire as a dower, with a royal dignity annexed to it."

⁹ Osbern, 114. The history of Dunstan is remarkably certain ; for even the facts against him are taken from his friends and encomiasts.

¹⁰ This incident has escaped the notice of our historians. It is in the *Historia Eliensis*. 3 Gale, 491. 492.

¹¹ Wallingford, 545.

This circumstance pours new infamy on her head, for the action by which she closed his reign.

The state of the kingdom gave power to her malice. However the proceedings at Calne may have affected the credulous people, the surviving sufferers and their friends could hardly have been deceived. They must have determined vengeance against Dunstan; and, as he was protected by the favour of his sovereign, Edward became unfortunately the first object of attack. It is stated, that Elfrida and some princes conspired together to dethrone Edward in favour of Ethelred, and that the death of Edward was devised as the means. The unsuspecting king facilitated the execution of the plot. He was hunting in Dorsetshire, near Wareham, a few miles from which stood Corfe Castle, the residence of Elfrida and her son. His companions were dispersed in pursuit of the game, and, in the course of the sport, Edward beheld the conspicuous walls of the castle.¹² He rode thither to visit Ethelred and his mother. On the tidings of his arrival, she hastily settled her plan. She went out and received him kindly, and invited him in. The king declined to alight; but desired some refreshment, and requested to see his brother. A cup of drink was brought to him, but while he was raising it to his lips, a wretch, stealing behind, stabbed him in the back. Feeling the wound, he spurred his horse to escape the assassin, but the blow had been too successful: he fell from his seat; his feet hung in the stirrups, and the frightened steed dragged his expiring lord over the rugged way. His friends traced him by his blood, found at last his disfigured corpse, and buried it at Wareham.¹³

CHAP.
VII.

Edward
the Martyr.

978.

¹² The interesting ruins of Corfe Castle still remain.

¹³ Malmsb. 61. Ingulf, 54. Mailros, 151.

The chroniclers say, he was buried; but Lupus, in his sermon, says, occisus est et postea combustus. Hickes.

CHAP. VIII.

Ethelred the Unready.

BOOK
VI.
Ethelred
the Unready.
978.

ETHELRED succeeded; but the action which procured his power was too atrocious to give all the effect to the policy of his adherents which had been projected. Dunstan retained his dignity, and at least his popular influence; for what nation could be so depraved as to patronize a woman, who, at her own gate, had caused her king and son-in-law to be assassinated! In attempting to subvert Dunstan, by such a deed, she failed. After no long interval, he excited the popular odium, and the terrors of guilt, so successfully against her, that she became overwhelmed with shame, and took shelter in a nunnery, and in building nunneries, from the public abhorrence.

The reign of Ethelred is a subject displeasing to narrate. Indignation, at the most helpless pusillanimity, kindles every moment. In the preceding reigns, from Alfred to Edgar, we have beheld the rise, and the full meridian of the Anglo-Saxon glory. The English spirit was never agitated by danger, but it acted to triumph. By their exertions, a rich and powerful nation had been created, which might have continued to predominate in Europe with increasing honour and great national felicity. But from the time of the last Edward's assassination, the splendid prospects began to fade. The night of calamity drew near with all its horrors. Its approach was invited by a disordered country, a divided court, and an incapable sovereign. Never was the alarming truth more painfully exhibited, that the prosperity of a nation depends on the talents of its governors, and the unanimity of the great.

Ethelred, like a Henry the Sixth, was only fit for a cloyster, and England mourned his long reign amid calamities the most multiplied and incessant.

CHAP.
VIII.
Ethelred
the Unready.

978.

Ethelred was but ten years of age when he attained the crown. His amiable disposition gave the tears of affection to his brother's memory; but Elfrida could not pardon a sensibility which looked like accusation, and might terminate in rebellion to her will, and the disappointment of her ambition. She seized a waxen candle which was near, and beat the terrified infant with a dreadful severity, which left him nearly expiring. The anguish of the blows never quitted his remembrance. It is affirmed, that during the remainder of his life, he could not endure the presence of a light.¹ Perhaps the irresolution, the pusillanimity, the yielding imbecility, which characterized him during his long reign, may have originated in the perpetual terror which the guardianship of such a mother, striving to break his temper into passive obedience to her will, on this and other occasions, wilfully produced.

As her power declined, the feelings of the nation expressed themselves more decidedly. The commander of Mercia and Dunstan, attended by a great crowd, went to Wareham, removed the body of the deceased sovereign, and buried it with honour at Shaftesbury.² Dunstan might now triumph: though his opponents might equal him in crime, they were deficient in art.

After a flow of prosperity uninterrupted for nearly a century, England, in the full tide of its strength, was insulted by seven Danish ships, which plundered Southampton and Thanet. The same vikingr, in the next season, ravaged in Cornwall and Devonshire.³ In the year following, three ships molested the isle of Portland.⁴

980.

¹ Malmsb. 62.

² Flor. 362. Sax. Chron. 125.

³ Flor. Wig. 362. Sax. Chron. 125. Tib. B. 1. As Olave Tryggvason was at this time marauding on the English coast, and

at last reached the Scilly Isles, he may have been the sea-king who renewed the invasion of England.

⁴ Flor. 363. Sim. Dun. 161.

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The re-appearance of the Northmen excited much conversation at the time.⁵ Another attempt of the same sort was made at Wecedport, where the English gained the field of burial, though Goda, the governor of Devonshire, and the brave Stenwold, fell.⁶

991. But these unimportant attempts were followed by more serious aggressions. A large force, commanded by Justin and Gurthmund, attacked Ipswich.⁷ They advanced from an unguarded coast, through an unguarded country, as far as Malden. Brithnoth, the governor of Essex, opposed them with manly patriotism; but on his fate victory settled with the Danes.

No reasonable constancy would have been alarmed at this disaster. It is natural to war, that its successes should vary. The defeats of a courageous nation should only augment their energy, their unanimity, and decision. This particular disaster had nothing in it which could justify despair. The island was flourishing in abundant population; its military strength was entire; its government undisputed.

The remedy adopted by Ethelred and his ministers, on the defeat at Malden, was, not to march a new army, not to rouse to increased activity, but to buy off the invaders! Siric, the successor of Dunstan, reasoned with others, that as they only came for booty, it would be wiser to give them what they wanted. Ten thousand pounds were accordingly disgracefully granted as the price of their retreat.⁸

The payment is noticed by the annalists as having produced the evil of direct taxation. We now pay that, says the chronicler of the twelfth century, from custom, which terror first extorted for the Danes.⁹ The impositions were not remitted when the necessity had disappeared.

⁵ Malmsb. 62.

⁶ Flor. Wig. 364. Sax. Chron. 126. Dunstan died this year. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. merely mention his death, without the printed addition of his attaining heaven. Siric was consecrated to his see. The preced-

ing year was memorable for its morbid calamity.

⁷ The printed chronicle leaves the place an imperfect blank. The MS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. have both Gypeswic; and see Flor. 364.

⁸ Malm. 62. 365. Sax. Chr. 126. Fl. 365.

⁹ Hunt. 357.

Ethelred has been painted to us as a tall handsome man, elegant in manners, beautiful in countenance, and interesting in his deportment.¹⁰ The sarcasm of Malmsbury gives his portrait in a sentence: he was "a fine *sleeping* figure."¹¹ He might adorn a lady's cabinet; he disgraced a council.

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When soberer thoughts had sway, the right means of defence were put in action. Powerful ships were constructed at London, and were filled with selected soldiers;¹² but all the wisdom of the measure was baffled by the weak choice of a commander. Alfrie was the person intrusted to command the Anglo-Saxon fleet.

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Alfrie, in 983, had succeeded his father in the dukedom of Mercia.¹³ Three years afterwards he was expelled from England.¹⁴ In 992, he was appointed to lead the new fleet, with another duke, and two bishops. Their commission was to surprize the Danes in some port at which they could be surrounded. The judicious scheme was foiled by Alfrie's treason. When the Danes were traced to a station which admitted of the enterprize, he sent them word of the intention, and consummated his perfidy by sailing secretly to join them. The Anglo-Saxons found the enemy in flight, but could only overtake one vessel. The rest did not, however, reach their harbours unmolested; a division of the English fleet from London and East Anglia met them on their way, and attacked them with a bravery natural to the island. The capture of Alfrie's vessels crowned their victory, but its ignominious master escaped, though with difficulty. The king, whose ill judgment had given opportunity for the treachery, barbarously avenged it on Alfrie, by blinding his son Algar.¹⁵

This wise exertion, badly as it had been conducted, gave immediate safety to the southern countries; but the royal

993.

¹⁰ Flor. Wig. 362. Matt. West. 378.

¹¹ Rex—pulchre ad dormiendum factus, p. 63.

¹² Flor. 365.

¹³ Flor. 363. Sax. Chron. 125.

¹⁴ Flor. 363. Sim. Dun. 161.

¹⁵ Flor. 366. Malmsb. 62.

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vigilance was unable to stretch into the Northern district. There an armament stormed Bebbanburgh, and afterwards, turning to the Humber, filled part of Lincolnshire and Northumbria with their depredations. The provincials armed to defend their possessions, but they unhappily confided the command to three men of Danish ancestry, who with fatal treachery fled at the moment of joining battle.¹⁶

Countries are as much protected from hostile invasion by an ancient reputation as by an existing strength. Many feeble intervals occur to all when determined aggressions might be fatal, but the fame of former deeds becomes their safeguard, and the dangerous season passes away before its reality is obvious. Should, however, unfortunate events occur, which break through the ideal fortification, and unveil the helpless nakedness of the land, conquest spreads with an eagle's flight, and great revolutions give new fortunes and new masters to the nation assaulted.

994.

In 994, the breezes of the spring wafted into the Thames two warlike kings, Olave Tryggva's son, king of Norway, and Svein king of Denmark, in temporary confederation. They came with ninety-four ships. They were repelled at London; but though their force was unimportant, they were able to overrun the maritime part of Essex and Kent, and afterwards Sussex and Hampshire, with successful outrage.¹⁷ In this hour of calamity, when a small exertion of the national vigour could have overpowered the invaders, what was the heroism of Ethelred? He sent to know the sum which would stop the hostilities! Illustrated by such a message, the bishop Lupus might well say, that a single Northman could put to flight ten Anglo-Saxons.¹⁸ Sixteen thousand pounds was the sum demanded, by fewer than 10,000 men, for the redemption of England.¹⁹

¹⁶ Sim. Dun. 162. Sax. Chr. 127.

¹⁷ Sax. Chron. 128. Flor. Wig. 366, Sim. p. 103.
Dun. 162.

¹⁸ Sermo Lupi, in Hicckes's Thes. Dissert.

¹⁹ Sax. Chron. 129. Flor. 367.

Olave was invited to Ethelred's court, and, upon receiving hostages for his safety, he went to the royal city, where the king received him with honour. During his visit, he received the Christian rite of confirmation, and had rich presents. When he departed for his country in the summer, he promised to molest England no more, and he kept his word.²⁰

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The army of Svein, on the last capitulation, had wintered at Southampton. After three years respite, it navigated along Wessex, and, doubling the Land's End, it entered the Severn. Wales, and afterwards Cornwall and Devonshire, were infested. Sailing up the Thamar, they leaped from their ships, and spread the flames as far as Lydeford. The monastery of Tavistock fell amid the general ruin. Their ships were laden with the plunder, and the invaders wintered in security near the scene of their outrage.²¹

998.

Resuming their activity with the revival of vegetation, they sailed to the Frome, and spread over great part of Dorset. Advancing thence to the Isle of Wight, they made alternate insults on this district and Dorsetshire, and compelled Sussex and Hampshire to supply them with provisions.²² But was the powerful nation of England thus harassed with impunity? When its enemies even stationed themselves on its coasts in permanent hostility, was no exertion directed to repress them? The answer of history is, that often was the Anglo-Saxon army collected to punish, but as soon as the battle was about to commence, either some treason or some misfortune prevented. They quitted their ranks, and gave an easy triumph to the better conducted Danes.²³

In the next year, the Danish army, almost naturalized in England, approached the Thames, and, turning into the Medway, surrounded Rochester. The Kentishmen assembled to protect their city, but after a furious battle they yielded

²⁰ Malmsb. 63. Sax. Chron. 129. Sim. Dun. 163.

²² Sax. Chron. 129. Sim. Dun. 164.

²¹ Sim. Dun. 163. Sax. Chron. 129. Malmsb. 63.

²³ Flor. 368. Sim. Dun. 163.

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their dead to the invaders, who, collecting horses, almost destroyed the west of Kent.²⁴

At last a ray of prudence darted from the cabinet. A naval and military armament was ordered against the invaders.²⁵ But the chosen generals were unworthy of their honour. They interposed wilful delays in the equipment of the force. The fleet, when ready, was merely assembled; day after day drawled on without exertion, and injured only the miserable people assessed to provide it. Whenever it was about to sail, some petty obstacle delayed it. The enemy was always permitted to increase and unite his strength; and when he chose to retire, then our fleet pursued. Thus even the very means which, properly used, would have cleared the British ocean of its oppressors, only increased the calamity of the nation. The people were called to labour to no purpose; their money was wasted as emptily; and by such mock preparations, the enemies were more encouraged to invade.²⁶

If amid such national misery and disgrace, it were decorous to select topics of ridicule, it could not but be noticed, that when it pleased the Danish leader to return voluntarily to Denmark, satiated with spoil, Ethelred commenced a warlike campaign. This man, so pusillanimous when an afflicted country invoked his assistance, was yet brave and active enough to attack, with resolution and effect, the harmless people in the North. With his army he almost depopulated Cumberland. His fleet set sail to coast round Wales and meet him; for its officers were alert to plunder an inconsiderable country; the winds however rescued the Cumbrians from their avarice, and they ravaged the Isle of Man as the substitute.²⁷

1000.

A powerful diversion happened this year in favour of Ethelred; for the quarrel between Svein and Olave attained

²⁴ Sax. Chron. 130. Matt. West. 386.

²⁵ Sax. Chron. 130.

²⁶ Flor. 369.

²⁷ Flor. 369. Sax. Chron. 130.

its height. Assisted by a Swedish king,²⁸ and the son of Hakon Jarl,²⁹ Svein attacked Olave by surprize, near the island of Wollin, with a great superiority of force. The bravery of Olave could not compensate for a deficiency of numbers. His ship was surrounded; but, disdaining to be a prisoner, he leapt into the sea,³⁰ and disappeared from pursuit. Popular affection, unwilling to lose its favourite, gave birth to that wild rumour which has so often attended the death of the illustrious, that the king had escaped the fray, and was living recluse on some distant shore.³¹ Authentic history places his death in this battle.³²

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This diversion was made more complete by the Northmen also molesting Normandy.³³ But the interval brought no benefit to England. The Danes returned, in 1001, with their usual facility; and 24,000 pounds was the third ransom of the English nation.³⁴

The year 1002 has become memorable in the annals of crime, by an action as useless as imbecility could devise, and as sanguinary as cowardice could perpetrate. On the day before St. Brice's festival, every city received secret letters from the king, commanding the people, at an appointed hour, to destroy the Danes there suddenly by the sword, or to surround and consume them with fire. This order was the more atrocious, as the Danes were living in peace with the Anglo-Saxons. The expressions of Malmsbury imply even an endeared amity of connection; for he says, with correct feeling, that it was miserable to see every one betray his dearest guests,

Massacre of
the Danes.

²⁸ Sweden was at this time in the hand of many kings: "Isto tempore multi erant Uplandiarum reges, suæ singuli provinciæ imperitantes—Heidmarkiæ imperium tenuere duo frates—Gudsbrandaliæ Gudrodus; etiam Raumarikia suus erat rex; suus quoque Thotniæ et Hadalandiæ nec non suus Valdresia. Snorre, v. 2. p. 36. 37.

²⁹ Theodoric, c. 14. p. 23. Ara Frode, p. 49. Snorre details the confederacy against Olave, l. p. 334—345. Saxo gives the Danish account, l. 10. p. 191.

³⁰ Saxo. 191. Snorre, 345.

³¹ Theodoric, 24. The tale must have made impression, for Theodoric declares, he knows not which relation was the truest.

³² Ara Frode dates it 130 years after the fall of Edmund in East Anglia, or in 1000, c. 7. p. 49. The conquerors shared Norway. Snorre, 348.

³³ Sax. Chron. 130.

³⁴ Sax. Chron. 132. Both the MS. Chronicles have 24,000 pounds.

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whom the cruel necessity made only more beloved.³⁵ To murder those we have embraced, was an horrible idea, congenial only to Ethelred and his counsellors.

The tyrannical command was unfortunately obeyed. All the Danes dispersed through England, their wives, their families, even their youngest babes, were mercilessly butchered.³⁶ So dreadful was the excited spirit, that Gunhilda, the sister of Svein, who had married an English earl, had received Christianity, and had voluntarily made herself the pledge of Danish peace, was ordered to be beheaded by the infamous Edric. Her husband and boy were first slain in her presence. She foretold the vengeance which would pour upon the English nation, and she joined her lifeless friends.³⁷

Great villany has been supposed to proceed from great mental energy perverted. But Ethelred evidenced an absolute incapability of the most common associations of human reasoning. That Svein would return in vengeance was a natural expectation; and yet who was appointed to rescue England from his fury? Elfric. To Elfric, whom the king had banished for his misconduct, who had proved his gratitude for his pardon, by an enormous treachery; whose son the king had in return deprived of eye-sight; who now by some new intrigue was restored to favour: to this man Ethelred intrusted the defence of the country.

1003. Svein did not long delay the provoked invasion; he landed at Exeter, and by the treachery of the Norman governor,

³⁵ Malmsb. 64.

³⁶ Matt. West. 391. Sax. Chron. 133. Flor. 370. Sim. Dun. 165. Hoveden, 429. Rad. Dic. 461. Malmsb. 64. Hunt. 360. Bromton, 885. Knyghton, 2315. Walsingham Ypod. 18. unite in stating that all the Danes in England were killed. That only the Danish soldiers in English pay were killed, appears to me to have no foundation. Gunilda and her family were not Danish mercenaries, nor were the women and children, of whom Wallingford speaks, whose loose authority has been put against all the rest. We find that Edgar admitted many Danes

into England; many more must have settled out of the different invaders in Ethelred's reign. To what Danish families the cruel order extended, cannot now be ascertained. I cannot think that it could possibly include those whose ancestors came into England in Alfred's youth, and who settled in East Anglia and Northumbria, because the four or five generations which had elapsed, must have made them Englishmen. How many perished cannot be explored. The crime of the schemers depends not upon the number of the victims.

³⁷ Matt. West. 391. Malmsb. 69.

whom the king had set over it, he obtained and dismantled it.³⁸ He proceeded through the country to Wilts, avenging his murdered countrymen. The Anglo-Saxons, under Elfric, met him. The instant that the battle was about to join, Elfric affected a sudden illness, and declined the contest. Enraged and disorganized by his pusillanimity, the English fled the field.

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In the next year, Svein led his fleet to Norwich, and burnt it. Ulfketul, the brave duke of East Anglia, by one exertion,³⁹ taught the Danes the true strength of the power of England, when wielded by an arm of vigour. A dreadful famine afflicted England, and the Danes returned to the Baltic.⁴⁰

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Ethelred had, in 1002, married Emma, the daughter of Richard the Third, duke of Normandy.⁴¹ The king's infidelity and neglect was resented by his high-spirited queen.⁴² The insult was personal, and her anger was natural; but that her father should avenge it by seizing all the English who happened to pass into his dominions; by killing some and imprisoning the rest,⁴³ was an act of gross and inexcusable barbarity, though it announces the contempt into which England had sunk.

Never was such a nation plunged into calamity so unjustifiably. The means were abundant of exterminating Svein, and such invaders, if a government had but existed, competent to put them in action. The report of Turketul to Svein was an exact picture of the English condition: "A country illustrious and powerful; a king asleep, solicitous only about women and wine, and trembling at war; hated by his people, and

³⁸ Flor. 371.

³⁹ Flor. 372.

⁴⁰ Flor. 372. Sax. Chron. 134. The famine is a strong evidence of the extent of Svein's vindictive ravages.

⁴¹ Sax. Chron. 132. He had married an

earl's daughter before, who brought him Edmund. Ethel. Abb. 362.

⁴² Malmsb. 64.

⁴³ Matt. West. 382. Walsingham narrates that Ethelred attempted an invasion of Normandy, which ended very unfortunately. Ypodigma Neustræ, p. 16.

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derided by strangers. Generals, envious of each other; and weak governors, ready to fly at the first shout of battle.⁴⁴

Ethelred was liberal to poets who amused him. Gunnlaugr, the scald, sailed to London, and presented himself to the king with an heroic poem,⁴⁵ which he had composed on the royal *virtues*. He sang it, and received in return a purple tunic, lined with the richest furs, and adorned with fringe; and was appointed to a station in the palace.⁴⁶ By a verse which remains of it, we may see that adulation is not merely an indigenous plant of eastern climates, or of polished times, but that it flourishes hardily, even amid Polar snows, and in an age of pirates.

The soldiers of the king, and his subjects,

The powerful army of England,

Obey Ethelred,

*As if he was an angel of the beneficent Deity.*⁴⁷

The history of successful devastation and pusillanimous defence, is too uniform and disgusting to be detailed. In 1006, the Danes obtained 36,000 l.⁴⁸ In 1008, the feeble king oppressed his subjects with a new exaction. Every 310 hides of land were assessed to build and present one vessel, and every eight hides were to furnish an helmet and breast-plate.⁴⁹ The hides of England, according to the best enumeration of

⁴⁴ Malmsb. 69.

⁴⁵ Gunnlaugi Saga, c. 7. p. 87.

⁴⁶ Gunn. Saga, p. 89. When he left Ethelred, in the following spring, the king gave him a gold ring which weighed seven ounces, and desired him to return in autumn, p. 99. The Scald was lucky. He went to Ireland and sang. The king there wished to give him two ships, but was told by his treasurer, that poets had always clothes, or swords, or gold rings. Gunnlaugr accordingly received fine garments and a gold ring, p. 103. In the Orkneys a poem procured him a silver axe, p. 103. In Gothland he got an asylum of festivity for the winter, p. 105. At Upsal he

met another poet, Rafn, and, what was worse, when both had sung, the king asked each for his opinion on the other's composition. The catastrophe need hardly be mentioned. Rafn told Gunnlaugr, that there was an end of their friendship, p. 115.

⁴⁷ Gunnl. 89.

⁴⁸ The printed Sax. Chron. p. 136. says, 30,000. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and E. 4. have 36,000. Flor. 373. Mailros, 154. Hoveden, 430. Peterb. 34. Al. Bev. 114. Sim. Dun. 166; and Rad. Dic. 462. also give 36,000.

⁴⁹ Sax. Chron. 136.

them which exists,⁵⁰ were 243,600. If we take this as the criterion, the taxation produced an additional force of 785 ships, and armour for 30,450 men.

Ethelred had now got a new favourite in Edric; a man of low birth, but eloquent, plausible, and crafty. He is noted for excelling all men in perfidy and cruelty. He was made duke of Mercia in 1007. He had six brothers, one of whom is called the father of the famous earl Godwin.⁵¹

The fleet, the product of the new assessment, assembled at Sandwich. Brihtric, the brother of Edric, and as ambitious and deceitful, accused Wulfnoth, an officer in Sussex. Wulfnoth fled, and carried twenty ships with him, and commenced pirate. Brihtric pursued with eighty ships, but a tempest wrecked, and Wulfnoth burnt them. These events destroyed the confidence and the courage of the rest of the fleet. It dispersed and retired.⁵² The annalists add, that thus perished all the hopes of England.

In 1010, the Danish triumphs were completed in the surrender of sixteen counties of England, and the payment of 48,000 pounds.⁵³

⁵⁰ The very ancient catalogue which Spelman copied into his Glossary, 353, and Camden into his Britannia, presents to us a detailed account of the hides in England. Gale has published one almost similar, but not quite. *Rer. Ang. v. 3. p. 748.* There has been some error in using this. Camden and Gale state it to contain only the land on this side of the Humber. But this is a mistake; for, besides enumerating the hides in all the divisions of the Octarchy, but Northumbria, it adds twenty-eight other districts, which it is reasonable to suppose must belong to the part not before mentioned, or Northumbria. And if we attentively consider it, we shall find that it actually contains part at least of Northumbria; for it mentions "Elmet sætna," or the Wood of Elmet, 600 hydes. Now the Wood of Elmet was notoriously in Northumbria, near Leeds. I think I perceive others which were in the same province, as East Wixna 300 hydes, and West Wixna 600 hydes. There is a little river in Yorkshire called the Wisk, which runs by

Northallerton, rather north and south, so that the land on each side might be called, not unaptly, East and West Wisk. This river has given name to some places near it, as Danby Wisk, and Uskerly. But in applying any calculation of hides in England to a particular reign, we should recollect Higden's caution: "*Sed hodie nemoribus succisis, novalibus que procisis, multo plures sunt Hidæ et Villæ quam tunc erant.*"—p. 201.

⁵¹ *Flor. Wig. 373.*

⁵² *Flor. Wig. 374. Sax. Chron. 137, 138.* In mentioning Wulfnoth, the printed Saxon Chronicle adds, that he was the father of earl Godwin, p. 137. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. has not these words, nor the Tib. B. 4. nor the Laud MS. which Gibson quotes. As he only marks the Laud MS. to be without, I presume that his other MSS. had them.

⁵³ *Flor. 375—378. Sax. Chron. 139—142.* For a particular description of this dismal period, see Osberne's Life of S. Elphegus, who was taken into Canterbury and killed, because 3,000l. were not paid for his ransom.

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The next invasion of Svein was distinguished by the revolution of the government of the country. The people gradually seceded from Ethelred, and appointed the Dane their king. The earl of Northumbria, and all the people in his district, the five burghers, and all the army on the north of Watling-street, submitted to his sovereignty.⁵⁴ He ordered them to supply provisions and horses, and committing their hostages and his ships to his son Canute, he commenced a visit of decisive conquest to the south. Oxford and Winchester accepted his dominion; but London resisted, because Ethelred was in it.

Svein marched to Bath, and the duke Ethelmere, and all the western thanes, yielded themselves to him. The citizens of London at last followed the example.

Ethelred's
flight.

Terrified by the universal disaffection, Ethelred sent his children into Normandy,⁵⁵ and privately withdrew to the Isle of Wight,⁵⁶ where he passed his Christmas; after which, on hearing of their good reception by his queen's brother, Richard, he departed also himself, and was kindly received.⁵⁷

Svein's death.

The new sovereignty of Svein was severe upon the people,⁵⁸ but short. He died, the year after his elevation, at Gainsborough.⁵⁹

This event produced a new change in the Anglo-Saxon politics. The Danish soldiers in England, the Thingamanna,⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Sax. Chron. 143.

⁵⁵ Sax. Chron. 143, 144. Flor. Wig. 379, 380. Malmsb. 69. This author remarks, that the Londoners did not abandon the king till he fled himself. He says of them in high panegyric: "Laudandi prorsus viri et quos Mars ipse collata non sperneret hasta si duces habuissent."

⁵⁶ Cumque clandestinis itineribus. Malms. p. 69.

⁵⁷ Malmsb. 70. Flor. 380.

⁵⁸ Hermannus, who wrote in 1070, thus describes his pecuniary exactions: "Sueyn insuper lugubre malum scilicet ubique ponit tributum quod infortunium hodieque luit Anglia, multum felix, dives ac dulcis nimium si non forent tributa." MS. Tib. B. 2. p. 25.

⁵⁹ The annalists are fond of stating, that he was killed by St. Edmond; Snorre adds a curious comparison, "Just," says he, "as Julian the Apostate was killed by *Saint Mercury*." Saga Olafi Helga, c. 11. p. 10.

⁶⁰ The body of troops who, during Svein's prosperity, and the reigns of his posterity, became stationary in England, are called Thingamanna by Snorre, t. 2. p. 15. The Olaf Tryggvason's Saga, p. 100; and the Knytlinga Saga (Celto Scand. p. 103.) say they received appointed stipends. Their commander, Heming, kept the conquered country in subjection to Canute. Two of their orders were, not to disperse rumours, and not to go beyond their city of a night. Trygg. Saga, p. 100. Celto Sc.

appointed Canute, the son of Svein, for their king;⁶¹ but the English chieftains sent to Ethelred to offer him the crown, on condition that he should govern rightly, and be less tyrannical.⁶²

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Ethelred sent his son Edward to make the required promises of good government.⁶³ Pledges were exchanged for the faithful performance of the contract; every Danish king was declared a perpetual outlaw,⁶⁴ and in Lent the king returned.

Canute had now to maintain his father's honours by his sword. Confronted by a powerful force of the English, he sailed from East Anglia to Sandwich, and landed the hostages which his father had received for the obedience of the English. But in revenge for the opposition of the nation, he brutally maimed them of their hands and noses.⁶⁵ They were children of the first nobility.⁶⁶ Canute then retired to Denmark, to watch his interest there, and to provide the means for stronger exertions to gain the crown of England.⁶⁷

To make head against Canute, Ethelred dispersed, around the neighbouring countries, high promises of reward to every warrior who would join the English standard:⁶⁸ a great number came to him. Among these was Olave, the son of Harald Grænski, a Norwegian sea-king, who, in 1007, at twelve years of age, had begun his maritime profession under a military tutor.⁶⁹ He afterwards obtained the crown of Norway, and the reputation of a saint. He arrived in England in the year of Svein's death.⁷⁰

Canute called to his aid Eric the Jarl, one of the rulers of

⁶¹ The Sagas state Canute to have been but ten years of age at Svein's death. But this is a mistake.

⁶² Flor. Wig. 381. About this time occurred the war against Brian, king of Connaught. See the Niala Saga in Celto Scand. 107—116. and 120—129. I mention it, because to this battle belong the poetical vision of the Northern destinies, and the Scaldic ode, which Gray has so vigorously translated in his Fatal Sisters.

⁶³ Flor. 381.

⁶⁴ Sax. Chron. 145.

⁶⁵ Flor. 382.

⁶⁶ Malmsb. 71.

⁶⁷ Encomium Emmae, written by a contemporary, 167. Svein's body was carried to Roschild, and buried. The autumn closed with an inundation of the sea, which laid the towns and country for many miles under water, and destroyed the inhabitants. Flor. 382. Malmsb. 71.

⁶⁸ Snorre's Olafi Helga, c. 6. p. 6.

⁶⁹ Snorre, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Snorre, p. 9. Knytlinga Saga, p. 103.

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Norway, and one of the sons of Hakon the Bad.⁷¹ He reached England, and his abilities made his advance the march of victory. The perfidious Edric crowned the treasons of his life by flying to Canute with forty ships. Wessex submitted to the invaders, and gave hostages for its fidelity.⁷²

1016.

The hostilities of the contending parties were now fast assuming the shape of decision. To Canute's well arranged army, Edmund, the son of Ethelred, endeavoured to oppose a competent force, but the panic of the king, excited by rumoured treachery, disappointed his hopes. Edmund then roused the Northern chiefs to predatory excursions, but the energy of Canute prevented success. The Danes marched through Buckinghamshire to Bedford, and thence advanced to York. Uhtred, the earl of Northumbria, and the people, abandoned Edmund, and gave hostages to Canute. Leaving his friend Eric Jarl in the government of the country, Canute returned to his ships. At this crisis, the death of Ethelred released England from its greatest enemy.⁷³

⁷¹ Knytlinga Saga, p. 10. Eric had gained great fame in two battles: one against Olave Tryggva's son, the other against the Joms-burgers. Snorre, 2. p. 23. Svein had given Norway to Eric, and his brother Hakon. When Eric came to England, he left his brother Hakon to govern all Norway, whom St. Olave expelled. Snorre, p. 211. Hakon was drowned. Ib. 321.

⁷² Sax. Chron. 146.

⁷³ Ib. 148. The Knytlinga Saga gives a particular description of Canute's exertions, interspersed with many quotations from the scalds, Ottar the Swarthy, Hallvardr, and Thordr, 104—107. Among the nobles who came with Canute were, Ulfr Jarl, the son of Sprakalegs, who had married Canute's sister, Astrida. Heming, and his brother Thorkell the Lofty, sons of the Earl-street Haralldr, were also in his army. Ib.

CHAP. IX.

The Reign of Edmund Ironside.

AT length the sceptre of the Anglo-Saxons came into the hand of a prince able to wield it with dignity to himself, and prosperity to his people. Like Athelstan, he was illegitimately born; but his spirit was full of energy; and his constitution was so hardy, that he obtained the surname of Ironside. It was his misfortune that he attained the crown in a stormy season; and, before his character and talents could operate to assuage the tempest, he was assaulted with the hostilities of a king, perhaps greater than himself. Had Edmund, like his father, acceded to the crown of a tranquil and thriving nation, the abilities of a Canute might have been foiled. But Edmund came amid a disorderly, unmoralized, ill-governed, exhausted people, half of whose territory was in the occupation of his enemy. He had no interval of respite to recruit his strength, or reform his country. He was dishonourably killed in the full exertion of his abilities.

An important struggle ensued between Edmund and Canute for the possession of London. It was long besieged in vain, sometimes by a part of Canute's forces, sometimes by all. London was at this time defended, on the south, by a wall which extended along the river.* The ships of Canute, from Greenwich, proceeded to London. The Danes built a strong military work on the south bank of the river, and drew up their ships on the west of the bridge, so as to cut off all access to the city. Edmund vigorously defended it awhile in person,

* Stephanides, in his description of London, written about 1190, so declares: "Si militereque ab austro Lundonia murata et turrita fuit." p. 3. Lond. 1723.

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Battle at
Scearstan.

and when his presence was required elsewhere, the brave citizens made it impregnable.²

During the siege, Edmund fought two battles in the country: one at Pen in Dorsetshire; the other, the most celebrated, at Scearstan, about midsummer.

Edmund selected the bravest soldiers for his first line of attack, and placed the rest as auxiliary bodies; then noticing many of them individually, he appealed to their patriotism and their courage, with that fire of eloquence which rouses man to mighty deeds. He conjured them to remember their country, their beloved families, and paternal habitations: for all these they were to fight; for all these they would conquer. To rescue or to surrender these dear objects of their attachments, would be the alternative of that day's struggle. His representations warmed. A country overrun, the massacres of ferocious victory, and plunder, every where triumphant, were anticipations which excited the Anglo-Saxons to every martial daring. In the height of their enthusiasm, he bade the trumpets to sound, and the charge of battle to begin. Eagerly his brave countrymen rushed against their invaders, and were nobly led by their heroic king. He quitted his royal station to mingle in the first ranks of the fight; and yet, while his sword strewed the plain with slaughter, his vigorous mind watched eagerly every movement of the field. He struggled to blend the duty of commander and the gallant bearing of a soldier. Edric the Infamous, and two other generals, with the men of Wilts and Somerset, aided Canute. On Monday, the first day of the conflict, both armies fought with unprevailing courage, and mutual fatigue compelled them to separate.³

² Sax. Chron. 148. Flor. 385. and Knytlinga Saga, 135—137. The verses of the scalds, Thordr, and Ottar the Swarthy, are cited on this subject. Snorre gives an account of Saint Olave, the Norwegian sea-king, assisting in the struggle at London. The principal achievement of Olave was to de-

stroy the fortified bridge from Southwark, which he calls a great emporium to the city, which the Danes defended. The effort, somewhat romantic, is sung by Ottar and Sigvatr. Saga af Olafi Helga, p. 11—13.

³ Flor. Wig. 385, 386.

In the morning the awful struggle was renewed. In the midst of the conflict, Edmund forced his way to Canute, and struck at him vehemently with his sword. The shield of the Dane saved him from the blow, but it was given with such strength, that it divided the shield, and cut the neck of the horse below it. A crowd of Danes then rushed upon Edmund, and, after he had slain many, he was obliged to retire. Canute was but slightly wounded.*

While the king was thus engaged, Edric the Infamous struck off the head of one Osmear, whose countenance resembled the king's, and, raising it on high, exclaimed to the Anglo-Saxons, that they fought to no purpose. "Fly, ye men of Dorset and Devon! Fly, and save yourselves. Here is your Edmund's head."†

The astonished English gazed in terror. The king was not then visible, for he was piercing the Danish centre. Edric was believed, and panic began to spread its withering poison through every rank. At this juncture Edmund appeared receding before the pressure of the Danes, who had rescued Canute. He saw the malice, and sent his spear as his avenger: Edric shunned the point, and it pierced two men near him.

But his presence was now unavailing. In vain he threw off his helmet, and, gaining an eminence, exposed his disarmed head to undeceive his warriors. The fatal spirit had gone forth; and, before its alarms could be counteracted, the army was in flight. All the bravery and skill of Edmund could only sustain the combat till night interposed.‡

The difficulty of the battle disinclined Canute from renewing it. He left the contested field at midnight, and marched afterwards to London to his shipping. The morn revealed his retreat to Edmund. The perfidious Edric, discerning the

* I derive this paragraph from the *Knytlinga Saga*, p. 130. Ottar the Swarthy celebrates the battle, and places it near the Tees, p. 131, in Johnstone's *Celtic Scandicæ*.
† *Flor. Wig.* 386. ‡ *Ibid.*

abilities of the king, made use of his relationship and early connection (he had married Edmund's sister, and had been his foster father) to obtain a reconciliation. In an ill-omened hour, Edmund consented to receive him on his oath of fidelity.⁷

Edmund followed Canute to London, and raised the siege of the city. A conflict soon followed between the rivals at Brentford.⁸ Both parties claim the victory.⁹ As Canute immediately afterwards beleaguered London again, the laurel seems to have been obtained by him. Baffled by the defence, he avenged himself on Mercia, whose towns, as usual, were committed to the flames, and he withdrew up the Medway. Edmund again urged the patriotic battle at Otford in Kent, and drove him to Shepey. A vigorous pursuit might have destroyed all Canute's hopes; but the perfidious counsels of Edric preserved the defeated invader.¹⁰

Battle of
Assandun.

When Edmund withdrew to Wessex, Canute passed into Essex, and thence advancing, plundered Mercia without mercy. Edmund, earnest for a decisive effort, again assembled all the strength of England, and pursued the Dane, who was retiring to his ships with his plunder. At Assandun, in the north part of Essex, the armies met. Edmund arranged his countrymen into three divisions, and, riding round every rank, he roused them, by his impressive exhortations, to remember their own valour, and their former victories. He intreated them to protect the kingdom from Danish avarice, and to punish, by a new defeat, the enemies they had already conquered. Canute brought his troops gradually into the field. Edmund made a general and impetuous attack. His vigour

⁷ It is the Knytlinga Saga which informs us that Edric had brought up Edmund: "*Cujus tamen nutricius iste Heidricus fuit.*" p. 139. victory to Edmund. The Knytlinga Saga says, Canute conquered; and adds, that the town was destroyed, p. 134.

⁸ Flor. Wig. 387. Sax. Chron. 149. The Knytlinga Saga quotes the verses of the scald Ottar on this battle, p. 134.

⁹ Florence and his countrymen give the

¹⁰ Flor. 387. Snorre mentions, that St. Olave fought at Canterbury; and quotes Ottar the Swarthy upon it, p. 14. but I cannot be certain that it was at this period.

and skill again brought victory to his arms. The star of Canute was clouded, when Edric, his secret ally, deserting Edmund in the very hour of success, fled from the field with the men of Radnor, and all the battalions he commanded. The charge of Canute on the exposed and inferior Anglo-Saxons was then decisive. The valour of Edmund was forgotten. Flight and destruction overspread the plain. A few, jealous of their glory, and anxious to give a rallying point to the rest, fought desperately amid surrounding enemies, and were all cut off but one man. In this dismal conflict almost all the valued nobility of England perished. Ulfketyl, the noble duke, who had alone taught Svein the force of English valour, was among the victims of Edric's treachery."

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The betrayed Edmund disdained the death of despair, and attempted new efforts to rescue his afflicted country. He retired to Gloucester; and, such was his activity and eloquence, that a fresh army was around him before Canute overtook him.

It was then that the greatness of Edmund's soul appeared. He could not endure that the blood of his best subjects should be so lavished for his personal profit; and he challenged Canute to decide their quarrel of ambition by a single combat.¹²

Edmund
challenges
Canute.

It is not certain whether the challenge was accepted; but a pacification was agreed upon between the princes; and England was divided between them. Canute was to reign in the north, and Edmund in the south. The rival princes exchanged arms and garments; the money for the fleet was agreed upon, and the armies separated.¹³

¹² Malmsb. 72. Flor. Wig. 388. Sax. Chron. 150. The Knytlinga Saga, and the scald Ottar, notice this conflict, p. 134. Snorre places one of St. Olave's battles in a place which he calls Hringmarabeide. He says, this was in the land of Ulfkell, p. 13. This expression somewhat approximates it to the battle of Assandun, for Ulfkell go-

verned the eastern districts of the island; and Dr. Gibson places this conflict at Assington in Essex. Camden thought it was Ashdown, in the north part of Essex.

¹³ I follow Malmsbury in ascribing the proposal to Edmund, p. 72.

¹⁴ Flor. Wig. 389. Sax. Chron. 150.

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The brave Edmund did not long survive the pacification. He perished the same year. The circumstances attending his assassination are variously given. Malmsbury mentions that two of his chamberlains were seduced by Edric to wound him at a most private moment with an iron hook; but he states this to be only rumour.¹⁴ The king's violent death, and its author, are less reservedly avowed by others.¹⁵ The northern accounts go even farther. The Knytlinga Saga and Saxo carry up the crime as high as Canute. They expressly state that Edric was corrupted by Canute to assassinate Edmund.¹⁶

Rise of Earl
Godwin.

A remarkable character began his progress to greatness in this reign: this was the famous earl Godwin, who possessed a power little less than sovereign for three reigns, and whose son Harold was the last of the Anglo-Saxon kings. His origin has never yet been mentioned in English history; but as the rise of poverty to grandeur is always an interesting contemplation, we will state the short history of Godwin's elevations.

An herds-
man's son.

That Godwin was the son of an herdsman, is a fact recorded in the MS. Chronicle of Radulphus Niger. This author says explicitly what no other has mentioned, "Earl Godwin was the son of an herdsman." It adds, that he was brought up by Canute.¹⁷ That the son of a Saxon herdsman should be brought up by Canute, is a circumstance so extraordinary as to excite our curiosity to enquire what introduced Godwin to the notice of the Danish king.

¹⁴ Malmsb. 72.¹⁵ As Hunt. 363. Matt. West. 401. Hist. El. 502. Hist. Ram. 434. Petrob. 37. Ingulf, 57. and many others. Hermannus, who wrote within fifty years after this event, says, "Nocte siquidem sequentis dici festivitatis Sancti Andreæ Lundoniæ perimitur insidiis Edrici Streane perfidissimi ducis." Cotton Lib. MS. Tib. B. 2. The encomiast of Emma says, he was long and greatly lamented by his people. p. 171.¹⁶ "Erat tunc temporis inter Anglos vir potens, Heidricus Striona nomine. Is a rege Canuto pecunia corruptus est ut Jatmundum clam interficeret. Hoc modo Jatmundus rex

periit." Knytl. Saga, p. 139. To the same purpose Saxo, "Memorant alii Edvardum clandestino Canuti imperio occisum." l. 10. p. 193. Snorre says, "Eodem mense Henrikus Striona occidit Edmundum regem." Olaf Helga, p. 24. Adam of Bremen says he was poisoned, p. 31.

¹⁷ It is a MS. in the Cotton Library, Vespasian, D. 10. In the second side of page 27, he says, "Godwinus comes filius bubulci fuit." He adds, "Hic Godwinus a rege Cnutone nutritus processu temporis in Daciam cum breve regis transmissus callide duxit sororem Cnutonis."

The Knytlinga Saga gives us that explanation which no other document affords.

One of the Danish chieftains, who accompanied Canute to England, has been noticed to have been Ulfr, the son of Sprakalegs, who had married Canute's sister Astrida.¹⁸ In the battle of Skorstein, between Canute and Edmund, he fought in Canute's first line, and pursued part of the English fugitives into a wood so eagerly, that when he turned to rejoin his friends, he saw no path; he wandered about it only to bewilder himself, and night involved him before he had got out of it. In the morning he beheld near him a full grown youth driving cattle to their pasture. He saluted the lad, and enquired his name: he was answered, "Gudin," or Godwin.

Ulfr requested the youth to shew him the track which would lead him to Canute's ships. Godwin informed him that he was at a great distance from the Danish navy; that the way was across a long and inhospitable wood; that the soldiers of Canute were greatly hated by the country people; that the destruction of the yesterday's battle at Skorstein was known around; that neither he nor any soldier of Canute's would be safe, if the peasants saw him; nor would the person be more secure who should attempt to assist an enemy.

Ulfr, conscious of his danger, drew a gold ring from his finger, and proffered it to the youth, if he would conduct him to his friends. Godwin contemplated it awhile; but that greatness of mind, which sometimes accompanies talents even in a lowly state, glowed within him; and, in an emanation of a noble spirit, he exclaimed, "I will not accept your ring, but I will try to lead you to your friends. If I succeed, reward me as you please."

¹⁸ Knytlinga Saga, p. 105. Of Ulfr's ancestry, Saxo has given an account very monstrous. His grandfather was called the Bear, because he was the child of a lady whom that animal had carried into the woods, p. 193. I observe that our Florence having occasion to mention Ulfr's nephew in a future reign, gives his genealogy thus:

"Danici Comitibus Ulfi filii Spraclingi filii *Ursi*," p. 408. We may therefore believe, that Ulfr's grandfather was named the Bear, but I should conceive that such a surname was not uncommon in those climes. Ferocity, dress, or many incidents, may have occasioned the title, which Saxo's creative fancy has interpreted into a wonderful tale.

He led Ulfr first to his father's humble mansion, and the earl received an hospitable refreshment.

When the shades of night promised secrecy, two horses were saddled, and Ulfadr, the father, bade the earl farewell. "We commit to you our only son, and hope, that if you reach the king, and your influence can avail, you will get him admitted into the royal household. Here he cannot stay; for, should our party know that he preserved you, his safety would be doubtful." Perhaps Ulfadr remembered the high fortunes of his uncle Edric, who was now duke of Mercia, and hoped that, if his son could get a station in the royal palace, he might, like Edric, ascend from poverty to greatness.

Godwin was handsome, and fluent in his elocution. His qualities and services interested Ulfr, and a promise to provide for him was freely pledged.

They travelled all night, and in the next day they reached the station of Canute, where Ulfr, who was much beloved, was very joyfully received. The grateful Jarl placed Godwin on a lofty seat, and had him treated with the respect which his own child might have claimed. He continued his attachment so far, as afterwards to marry him to Gyda, his sister. To oblige Ulfr, Canute, in time, raised Godwin to the dignity of Jarl."

¹⁰ Knytlinga Saga, 131—133.

CHAP. X.

Canute the Great.

CANUTE, from his warlike ability, surnamed the Brave; from his renown and empire, the Great; from his liberality, the Rich; and, from his devotion, the Pious;¹ obtained, on Edmund's death, the sovereignty of all England at the age of twenty.²

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X.
Canute
the Great.
1016.

The Northerns have transmitted to us the portrait of Canute; he was large in stature, and very powerful; he was fair, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose was thin, eminent, and aquiline; his hair was profuse; his eyes bright and fierce.³

He was chosen king by general assent; for who could resist his power? His measures to secure his crown were sanguinary and tyrannical; but the whole of Canute's character breathes an air of barbaric grandeur. He was formed by nature to tower amid his contemporaries; but his country and his education intermixed his greatness with a ferocity that compels us to shudder while we admire. In one respect he was fortunate; his mind and manners refined as his age matured. The first part of his reign was cruel and despotic. His latter days shone with a glory more unclouded.

His first policy was against the children of Ethelred and Edmund. One of his scalds, Sighvatr, sings, that all the sons

¹ Dr. Hickes's dedication to his Thesaurus. His baptismal name was Lambert. Frag. Isl. 2 Lang. 426.

² The Knytlinga Saga, and Olave Trygvason Saga, state Canute to have been but ten years old at his father's death. If so, he could be only twelve at his accession. This is not probable. One document speaks more

truly. Snorre, in his Saga af Magnusi Goda, states Canute to have been forty when he died. This was in 1035; and therefore in 1016, he must have been twenty-one. Snorre's words are, "Eodem autumnno vita functus est Rex Knutus potens in Anglia idibus Novembris natus tunc annos quadraginta," c. 4. p. 7.

³ Knytlinga Saga, p. 148.

of Ethelred he slew or banished.* The Saxon annalist assures us, that he determined at first to exile Edwig, the half brother of Edmund, but finding the English nobles both submissive and adulating, he proceeded to gratify his ambition by taking the prince's life. The infamous Edric suggested to him a man, Ethelwold, a nobleman of high descent, who would undertake to accomplish his criminal desires. The king incited Ethelwold to the measure. "Acquiesce with my wishes, and you shall enjoy securely all the honour and dignity of your ancestors. Bring me his head, and you shall be dearer to me than a brother." This was the language of a northern vikingr, to whom human life was of no value. Ethelwold affected a compliance; but his seeming readiness was but an artifice to get the child into his power, and to preserve his life. Edwig did not ultimately escape. The next year he was deceived by those whom he most esteemed, and, by Canute's request and command, he was put to death.⁵

With the same guilty purpose, he seized Edward and Edmund, the children of the last king; but he was counselled that the country would not endure their destruction. Alarmed from immediate crime, he sent them to the king of Sweden, to be killed. This prince was too noble to be a murderer, and had them conveyed to Salomon, the king of Hungary, to be preserved and educated.⁶ One died; the other, Edward, married Agatha, the daughter of Henry, the German emperor; and their issue was Edgar Atheling, who will be remembered in a future reign.

Canute, reserving to himself the immediate government of Wessex, committed East Anglia to Turketul, whose valour had greatly contributed to the subjection of England. He gave Mercia to Edric, and Northumbria to his friend Eric, the

* Attamen singulos.
Deinceps filiorum Adelradi
Vel interfecit Cnutus
Vel proscripsit.
Sigvatr Knutzdrapu, - quoted in
Knytl. Saga, p. 140.

⁵ Flor. Wig. 390, 391.

⁶ Flor. Wig. 391.

Norwegian prince. He made a public treaty of amity with the English chiefs and people, and by mutual agreement all enmities were laid aside. In the same year, the solemn compact was violated; for he slew three English noblemen without a fault.⁷ He banished Edwig, the king of the peasants,⁸ and divided the estates of the nobles among his Danish friends.

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X.

Canute
the Great.

1016.

The punishment of Edric would have been a homage to virtue from any other person than Canute. The crime he prompted, he should not have punished. But it is an observation almost as old as human nature, that traitors are abhorred by their employers. In the first days of Canute's unsettled throne, he confirmed Edric in his Mercian dukedom; but having used the profligate Saxon to establish his dignity, on the next claim of reward, he expressed his latent feelings. Edric imprudently boasted of his services: "I first deserted Edmund, to benefit you; for you I killed him." Canute coloured; for the anger of conscious guilt and irrepressible shame came upon him. "'Tis fit, then, you should die, for your treason to God and me. You killed your own lord! him who by treaty and friendship was my brother! your blood be upon your own head, for murdering the Lord's anointed; your own lips bear witness against you." The villain who perpetrated the fact was confounded by the hypocrite who had countenanced it. Eric, the ruler of Norway, was called in, that the royal intention might be secretly executed. He struck down the wretch with his battle-axe, and the body was thrown from the window into the Thames, before any tumult could be raised

⁷ Sine culpa. Flor. 391. Mailros, 155. The Encomium Emmae says, he killed many princes: "Multos principum quadam die occidere pro hujusmodi dolo juberet." The dolus here alleged was, that they had deceived Edmund. Their real crime may have been that they were powerful, and that their sub-

mission was dubious. Ingulf, 58. and the Annals of Burton, 247. mention some of Edric's friends as killed.

⁸ Ceorla cyng. Sax. Chron. 151. qui rex appellabatur rusticorum. Flor. Wig. 390. Bromton says he was the brother of Edmund, 907. but I doubt that this is an error.

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Canute
the Great.
1018.

among his partisans.⁹ The two sons of Ethelred, by Emma, were sheltered in Normandy.

Canute married Emma, called also Elfgiva, the widow of Ethelred. He distinguished his next year by a most oppressive exaction: from London he compelled 10,500 pounds, and from the rest of the kingdom 72,000.

To sooth the country, he sent home the largest portion of his Danish troops, keeping only forty vessels in England. In this he displayed the confidence of a noble mind. He maintained an exact equality, between the two nations, in ranks, council, and war. In 1019, England was so tranquil, that he went to Denmark, and passed the winter in his native country.

Canute maintained his dignity with a severe hand. In 1020, after his return from the Baltic, he held a great council in the Easter festivity at Cirencester. In this he banished the duke Ethelwerd. In 1021, he also exiled the celebrated Turketul.

1025. In this year the Anglo-Saxons obscurely intimate, that Canute went to Denmark, where he was attacked by Ulfr and Eglaf, with a fleet and army from Sweden. In one struggle Canute was unsuccessful; but afterwards the young earl Godwin attacked the enemies of Canute by surprize, with the English troops, and obtained a complete victory. This event raised Godwin and the English very greatly in the king's estimation.¹⁰

The Eglaf was St. Olave, who had possessed himself of the kingdom of Norway. Canute, occupied by his English crown, made at first no pretensions to the Norwegian sceptre.¹¹ The submission of England gave him leisure to turn the eye of

⁹ This narration is taken from Malmsb. 73. compared with Encom. Emmæ. The circumstances of his death are told differently, as usual. Florence admits that he was killed in the king's palace; but one says, that he was hanged; another, that he was

strangled; another, that he was beheaded. Human testimony is characterized by these petty variations.

¹⁰ Sax. Chron. 154. Matt. West. 405.

¹¹ Snorre, v. 2. p. 144.

ambition to the mountains of Norway.¹² Claims, those slight veils, with which states desirous of war always cover their unjust projects, to conceal their deformity from the giddy populace; claims adapted to interest the passions of vulgar prejudice, existed to befriend Canute. His father had conquered Norway; his relation, Haco, had been driven from it. Many of the people, who had most loudly welcomed St. Olave, had become dissatisfied at his innovations, and invited Canute to interfere.¹³

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X.
Canute
the Great.
1025.

The detail of the struggle between Canute and St. Olave need not be narrated here. Ulfr at first was among the enemies of Canute. He was afterwards pardoned and reconciled;¹⁴ and, in the king's conflict with the Swedes, was the means of saving Canute's life.¹⁵

At a feast in Roschild, Canute, according to Snorre, quarrelled with Ulfr at gaming. The indignant Jarl prudently retired. Canute taunted him on his cowardice for withdrawing. "Was I a coward when I rescued you from the fangs of the Swedish dogs?" was the answer of the irritated Ulfr. Canute went to his couch, and slept upon his resentment; but his fierce and haughty soul waked in the morning to demand blood. He sent his mandate, and Ulfr was stabbed in a church which he had entered.¹⁶

Canute descended so far beneath the manly courage of a hero, as to corrupt the subjects of Olave from their fidelity by money.¹⁷ Canute supported his insidious negotiations by a powerful fleet. Fifty ships of English thanes were with him, and every district in Norway which he approached, accepted him as its lord.¹⁸ He exacted for hostages the sons and dearest relations of the chiefs of Norway, and appointed Haco, the son of his friend Eric, to be the governor of his conquests.¹⁹

¹² Snorre, p. 212.

¹³ Snorre, 212, 213.

¹⁴ See Snorre, 26—69.; and compare Saxo's account, 195, 196.

¹⁵ Snorre, 271, 272.

¹⁶ Snorre, 276, 277.

¹⁷ Flor. Wig. 393. Theodoric, p. 129.

Snorre, 278.

¹⁸ Snorre, 295.

¹⁹ Snorre, 296.

BOOK
VI.
Canute
the Great.
1028.

St. Olave retired before the storm, which he was unable to confront, and took shelter in Russia. Haco sailed to England for his wife; but he was doomed to visit Norway no more. The last time his ship was seen on its return, was, late in the day, off Caithness, in Scotland; a furious storm was raging, and the wind was driving him towards the Pentland Firth: neither the vessel nor any of its mariners appeared again.²⁰ In the next year, St. Olave returned; but perished from the insurrection of his subjects, whom he had offended by his laws to accelerate their civilization.

1031. In 1031, Canute penetrated Scotland, and subdued Malcolm, and two other kings.²¹ Snorre says, he conquered great part of it.²²

Canute had the fame of reigning over six kingdoms.²³ As a soldier he was certainly eminent; but, fortunately for his fame, a few incidents have been preserved concerning him, which rescue his character from the charge of indiscriminate barbarism, and claim for him the reputation of a lofty mind.

He seems to have been one of those men, who feel that they are born to merit the approbation of future generations, and whose actions become sublimer, as their name seems likely to be perpetuated. He lived to posterity as well as to his country. It was in this strain, that having in a moment of intemperance killed a soldier, and by that criminal deed, violated a law which he had enforced on others, he assembled his troops, descended from his splendid throne, arraigned himself for his crime, expressed his penitence, but demanded a punishment. He proclaimed impunity for their opinions to those whom he appointed his judges; and, in the sight of all, cast himself humbly on the ground, awaiting their sentence. A burst of tears, at his

²⁰ Snorre, 321. Theodoric says, he was lost in the whirlpool of the Pentland Firth.

²¹ Sax. Chron. 154. Henry Hunt. 364. A northern scald calls the kings, the two kings of Fife.

²² P. 144. The Knytlinga Saga adds, that he appointed his son Harald to govern his

conquests. On the gigantic bones said to be found, 1520, in the place of the conflicts between Canute and Malcolm, they who think it worth while may read Stephanus's note on Saxo, p. 27.

²³ Saxo, 196. and see Encom. Emmae, 492.

greatness of soul, bedewed every spectator. They respectfully withdrew to deliberate, as he had required, and at last determined to let him appoint and inflict his own punishment. The king accepted the task. Homicide was at that time punishable by a mulct of forty talents. He fined himself three hundred and sixty, and added nine talents of gold as a further compensation.²⁴

CHAP.

X.

Canute
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There is something in the incident of the sea, which discovers a mind of power, looking far beyond the common associations of mankind. Canute had conquered many countries. In an age of valour and enterprize, his exploits had equalled the most adventurous. Poets embodied in their melodies the admiration of his people, and directed to his heart those praises, with which all Europe resounded. Encompassed with flattery and subjection, Canute's mind may have been swollen into temporary presumption. He may in the frenzies of vanity have fancied, like an Alexander, that he was scarcely a mortal. But his mind was too powerful to continue the slave of his conceit. The more he gazed on nature, the more he felt the adorable Being who governed him, as well as his people; the more he was humbled with the conviction of his individual insignificance. To communicate his solemn sensations, with all their impressions, to his adulating friends, he ordered the chair of his dignity to be placed on the sea beach. His courtiers formed around him; the tide was undulating to the shore, and Canute seated himself before it. "Ocean, the island on which I sit is mine, and thou art a part of my dominion. None of my subjects dare to resist my orders; I therefore command thee, that thou ascend not my coasts, nor presume to wet the borders of my robes."

In vain the mandate issued. He was not the master whom the waters revered; and in contempt of his authority, every wave drew nearer to his feet, till the general elevation of the

²⁴ Saxo, 199.

ocean covered his legs with its billows. It was then that he expressed the noble sentiment, which monopolized his mind. "Let every dweller upon the earth confess that the power of kings is frivolous and vain. He only is the Great Supreme, let HIM only be honoured with the name of Majesty, whose nod, whose everlasting laws, the heavens, the earth, and sea, with all their hosts, obey." In conformity to this sublime feeling, Canute would never afterwards wear his crown.²⁵

Among the kingly qualities in which Canute strove to excel, his liberality was distinguished.²⁶ Master of the tributes of several kingdoms, his resources were equal to the munificence of his heart. His journey from Flanders to Rome was a stream of expensive generosity. Whoever approached him was fed and cherished without a request.²⁷ Canute's presents in general had three objects; charity, literature, and public services.

The literature of his age was in the hands of two very different bodies of men; the clergy and the scalds. Both have extolled his liberality.²⁸ Of the scalds who attended him, the names and verses of many have survived to us. Sighvatr, Ottar the Swarthy, Thordr Kolbeinson, and Thorarin Loftunga, are among those whose historical poems or panegyrics have been much cited by Snorre in his northern history.²⁹

Thorarin was celebrated for the richness and celerity of his muse. He gave a striking specimen of this faculty. He had made a short poem on Canute, and went to recite it in his presence. On approaching the throne, he received a salute, and respectfully inquired if he might repeat what he had

²⁵ I have stated this incident from Matt. West. p. 409. Henry Huntingdon, 364. Rad. Dic. 469. Higden and Bromton.

²⁶ Knytlinga Saga, 145.

²⁷ Knytlinga Saga, 144, 145. Encomium Emmae, 173.

²⁸ For his donations to the church, see Matt. West. 404, 405, 409. Encom. Emmae, 173, and others. In mentioning his resources

from his kingdoms, the Knytlinga Saga gives to our country the praise of that superior affluence which it seems, in every age, to have displayed: "inter omnes septentrionales terras, opum ac thesaurorum Anglia facile sit ditissima," p. 146.

²⁹ In the second volume passim. Sighvatr was the son of Thordr, a scald. Snorre, 45.

composed. The king was at table at the close of a repast; but a crowd of petitioners were occupying their sovereign's ear by a statement of their grievances. The impatient poet may have thought them unusually loquacious: he bore the tedious querulousness of injury with less patience than the king, and at last, presuming on his general favour with the great, exclaimed, "Let me request again, Sire, that you would listen to my song; it will not consume much of your time, for it is very short." The king, angry at the petulant urgency of the solicitation, answered, with a stern look, "Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared—to write a *short* poem upon me! Unless by to-morrow's dinner you produce above thirty strophes, on the same subject, your head shall be the penalty." The poet retired—not with alarm, for his genius disdained that, but with some mortification at the public rebuke. He invoked the guardians of the Scandinavian Helicon; they showered their dreams upon him; and before the allotted time, he stood before the king with the exacted poem, and received fifty marks of pure silver as his reward.³⁰

As private anecdotes best display the real character, another may be permitted; and perhaps it will be most picturesque to give it in the words of the recording eye-witness. It occurred upon Canute's journey to Rome, at St. Omer's.

"Entering the monasteries, where he was received with great honour, he walked humbly, he fixed his eyes on the ground with wonderful reverence; and pouring out (if I may say so) rivers of tears, he implored the aid of the saints. But when the moment came of presenting his gifts upon the altar, how often did he impress the pavement with his kisses! how

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³⁰ Knytlinga Saga, 146, 147. Snorre mentions this shortly, p. 297. The poet afterwards, in his Tugdrapa, sung the present. See the stanza, in Knytl. p. 147. His short poem was of the kind which Snorre says,

"we call Flok." The longer was of the sort called Drapa. Snorre, p. 297. He gives a long specimen of the Drapa, p. 298, 299, and a specimen of the Flok, in p. 303.

often did he strike his venerable breast! what sighs! what prayers that he might not be found unworthy of the mercy of the Supreme! At length his attendants stretched forth his munificent oblation, which the king himself placed on the altar. But why do I say *the* altar, when I remember that I myself saw him go round every part of the monasteries, and pass no altar, however small, on which he did not leave a present, and which he did not salute. Then came the poor, and were all separately relieved. These and other bounties of the lord Canute, I your slave! Oh, St. Omer, St. Bertin, myself beheld in your monasteries; for which do you pray that such a king may live in the heavenly habitations, as your servants, the canons and monks, are daily petitioning.”³¹

This incident is inserted, because it affords a striking contrast to some actions of Canute's earlier life. A Dunstan might have acted such a scene for its theatrical effect. But in the proud master of so many conquered kingdoms, the emotions must have been those of his mind and heart.

Canute has himself described his journey to Rome in a public document, addressed to all the orders of the English nation:³² he says, he went for the redemption of his sins, and the welfare of his subjects; that he had projected it before, but had been hindered by business and other impediments. He adds:

“Be it known to you, that there was a great assembly of nobles at the Easter solemnity, with the lord the pope John, and Conrad the emperor.”³³ There were all the princes of the people, from Mount Gargano to the sea, who all received me with dignity, and honoured me with valuable presents. I was particularly honoured with various gifts and costly presents from the emperor, as well with gold and silver vessels, as with

³¹ Encomium Emmae, 173.

³² This letter of Canute's is in Flor. Wig. 394—397; Ingulf, 59—61; and Malmsb.

p. 74, 75. Its substance is stated in Matt. West. 407, and elsewhere.

³³ He was the fourth emperor after Otho the Great.

very rich apparel. I spake with the emperor, the pope, and the princes, on the necessities of my English and Danish subjects, that a more equal law, and better safeguard, might be granted to them in their journies to Rome; that they might not be hindered at so many fortified passages, nor oppressed by such unjust exactions. The emperor assented, and Rodolph, the king,³⁴ who rules most of the passages, and all the princes established, that my subjects, whether merchants or travellers from piety, might go and return to Rome without detention or exaction.

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“ I also complained before the pope, and expressed myself highly displeased that such an immensity of money should be extorted from my archbishops when they came to Rome for the pall. It was declared that this should not happen again.”

Canute, after mentioning that these concessions were ratified by oaths before four archbishops, twenty bishops, and an innumerable multitude of dukes and nobles, exclaims: “ Therefore, I return my liberal thanks to Almighty God, that all things which I desired, I have prosperously achieved as I had contemplated, and have fulfilled all my wishes.”

As these pages have not drawn a veil over those actions of Canute's, which breathe a barbarian spirit, it would be injustice to his more reflective age, to omit the following paragraphs of his public letter, which allude so nobly to his former conduct. In viewing his past actions with sentiments of regret, and in publicly confessing that he intends an

³⁴ In Florence he is called Rodolph; so in Malmsb. 74. But in Ingulf, both in Gale's edition, p. 60, and that of Frankfort, p. 893, he is named Robert. The difference is not merely verbal. Rodolph was the king of Burgundy; and Robert, the son and successor of Hugh Capet, was the king of

France. But as the clausuræ, or fortified passages, of which Canute speaks, were probably those of the Alps, which Rodolph commanded; and as Robert died in 1030, and Canute's journey is usually placed in 1031, there can be no doubt that Rodolph is the right reading.

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amendment, he displays a greatness of mind which kings of such successful ambition have seldom reached. Canute is an instance, rarely paralleled, of a character improved by prosperity. His worst actions were in his days of peril. When the full glory of established and multiplied power shone around him, his heart became humble, pious, and ennobled. Educated among vikings, his first misconduct may be referred to his tuition. His latter feelings were the rich produce of his improved intellect and magnanimity.

“ Be it also known to all, that I have vowed to Almighty God, to govern my life henceforward by rectitude, to rule my kingdoms and people justly, and piously to observe equal judgment every where; and *if, through the intemperance and negligence of my youth, I have done what was not just, I will endeavour hereafter, by God's help, intirely to amend it.* Therefore I beseech and command all my consiliarii, to whom I have confided the councils of my kingdom, that they in no shape suffer or consent to any injustice throughout my realm, neither from fear of me, nor from favour to any person of power; I command all the sheriffs and governors of all my realm, as they value my friendship or their own safety, that they impose unjust violence on no man, whether rich or poor; but that the noble and their inferiors, the wealthy and the needy, may enjoy their property justly. This enjoyment must not be infringed in any manner, neither in behalf of the king, nor any other man of power, nor on the pretext of collecting money for me, because there is no necessity that money should be obtained for me by unjust exaction.”

After alluding to some enemies whom he had pacified, and mentioning that he was returning to Denmark, whence, as soon in the summer as he could procure shipping, he proposed to visit England; he continues:

“ I have sent this letter first, that all my people may

rejoice in my prosperity, because, as you yourselves know, I have never forborne to apply myself and my labour, nor will I ever forbear to devote either, to the necessary utility of all my people."

These patriotic sentiments, from a royal pen, are highly valuable. Such kings give new splendor to their thrones, and secure to themselves that perpetuity of fame which mortality so covets.

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CHAP. XI.

The Reign of Harold the First, surnamed Harefoot.

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Harold
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CANUTE, at his death,¹ left three sons, Svein, Harold, and Hardicanute. In his life, he had placed Svein over Norway,² and he wished that Harold should rule in England, and Hardicanute in Denmark. At the council which met at Oxford to elect a new sovereign, the opinions were divided. The chiefs of Danish descent and connections chose Harold; the West Saxons, headed by earl Godwin, preferred his brother Hardicanute, because his mother, Emma, had been the wife of Ethelred, and was a favourite with the Anglo-Saxons. The children of Ethelred who were in Normandy were also remembered; but Harold, by force or influence, obtained a portion of the kingdom, and seized the treasures which Emma possessed from the gift of Canute.³ Harold, at first, reigned at London and north of the Thames; and Hardicanute in the west of England.

The murder of Alfred, one of the sons of Emma, by Ethelred, lies heavy on the memory both of Harold and Godwin.⁴

¹ He died at Shaftesbury, the 12th of November, 1035. MS. Tib. B. 1.

² Snorre, Saga Olafi Helga, p. 383. Florence calls his mother Northamtunensis Alfgivæ filiæ Alfhelmi Ducis, p. 398. Snorre names her Alfifo dottor Alfrims Jarls.

³ Flor. Wig. 398. MS. Sax. Chron. Tib. B. 1. It is said of Harold, that he was not Canute's son, but a cobbler's. The tale is, that his mother, finding herself not pregnant from Canute, pretended the condition, and introduced first Svein, and afterwards Harold, as her own children. As Snorre does not mention it of Svein, it is probable that in

both cases the rumour was the offspring of malignant competition. The author of Enc. Em. though he believes it, adduces only the plurimorum assertio for it, which is a better description of a rumour than of a fact. Florence states it as a res in dubio.

⁴ I state this from the Encomium Emmae. The author addresses his account to the mother herself, by whose orders he wrote it. (See his prologue.) He apologizes to her for his brevity on Alfred's sufferings, and says: "Possent enim multa dici si non tuo parcere-mus dolori," p. 175. Considering, however, that he wrote to the youth's mother, he is

Harold, though nominated king, could not obtain from the archbishop the regal benediction, because the children of Emma were alive. The archbishop, instead of committing to Harold the crown and sceptre, placed them on the altar, and forbad the bishops to give their benediction.

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This conduct produced the effects which might easily have been foreseen. Harold despised the benediction as useless, and contracted a hatred against the Christian religion, and the children of Emma. When others were attending divine service, he called out his hunting dogs, or studied to occupy himself in some contemptuous pursuit. To get the youths, so imprudently set against him, into his power, he forged a letter to them in their mother's name, inveighing against himself, and desiring one to come to her to be counselled as to his conduct. The answer of the princes from Normandy expressed their obedience, and appointed a day and place. At the time so named, Alfred, the youngest, chose his military companions, and sailed. His waiting enemies too eagerly pressed on him when about to land, and he sailed to another part, still unconscious of the deceit. Godwin, now become a courtier to Harold, met him in the garb of friendship, and with the mockery of oaths. The innocent youth followed him to Guildford; there his warlike friends were artfully separated into little bands of ten, twelve, or twenty, to be more conveniently entertained at different houses. A few only remained with the prince. Food and wine were profusely given to all, till they sought the bed of rest; then the agents of Harold furtively took away their arms, and in the morning bound them

sometimes horribly particular, for he describes part of their progress of operation. Malmsbury says, the deed took place between Harold's death and Hardicanute's election, p. 77; but this cannot prevail against the contemporary above cited, strengthened as it is as to its occurrence under Harold, by Flor. 399. Matt. West. 410. and Hoveden, 438. Two of these make 600 men to have perished. The printed

Saxon Chronicle has nothing of it. The MS. Tib. B. 1. give a long account of it. It thus mentions the fate of the companions: "His geferan he todraf 7 sume mislice ofsloh, sume hi man with feo sealde, sume hreowlice ac wealde sume hi man benede sume hi man blende, sume hamelode sume hættode." It adds, "Ne wearth dreorliere dæd gedon on thison earde syththan Dene comon."

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in chains. Their fate was decided by a bloody decimation; the tenth man only was left unmurdered.

The betrayed Alfred was hurried to the Isle of Ely. Vile judges were appointed over him, who directed his eyes to be removed. The scene is too shocking to be described. It closed by his death. Emma withdrew to Bruges.⁵ By Hardicanute's absence in Denmark, Harold obtained all England.⁶ He died in 1040, and was buried at Westminster.

⁵ Enc. 176. The author's account of Bruges, shews it to have been of commercial importance. Emma's name was also Elfgiya.

⁶ Ingulf, 61. Flor. 400. marks 1037 as the year when this occurred. So the MS. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4.

C H A P. XII.

The Reign of Hardicanute.

THIS reign demands but few sentences. He had sailed the preceding year from Denmark to his mother, Emma, at Bruges. On Harold's death he was invited to the English crown; and he came with purposes of such degraded revenge, that he even warred with the helpless, the consecrated dead. He brutally caused the body of Harold to be dug up, decapitated, and thrown first into a marsh, and afterwards into the Thames. A fisherman found and the Danes buried it in a cemetery which they had in London.¹ Such actions, whenever imitated, fix the stain of barbarism on the persons who counsel and the age which permit them.² "A generous vengeance wars not with the dead."

Hardicanute oppressed England with impositions which occasioned great misery. Insurrection followed, and military execution at Worcester gave a dreadful catastrophe.³

He projected to punish Godwin for Alfred's murder; but the Dane had a passion which predominated over his fraternal feeling; and the present of a splendid vessel, profusely gilt, and rowed by eighty men in sumptuous apparel and splendid armour, having each on his arm two golden bracelets, weighing sixteen ounces, expiated the crime of Godwin.⁴ He displaced a bishop for joining in the cruelty, who appealed to the same master passion, and escaped.⁵

¹ Flor. 402. Matt. West. 402. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. This MS. contains many paragraphs in this reign not in the printed chronicle.

² Even the age of Hardicanute condemned his cruelty: "Unde in singulorum ore hominum de eo haberi imprecatus ut tantæ cru-

delitatis non diu abesset animadversio."—Reg. Abb. MS. Cotton Lib. Claudius, C. 9. Malmsbury, p. 76, mentions it with disapprobation.

³ Flor. Wig. 403. MS. Chron. Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. Matt. West. 413. Malmsb. 76.

⁴ Flor. Wig. Matt. West. ⁵ Malmsb. 77.

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XII.

Hardicanute.

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It was, however, a laudable trait of brotherly affection in Hardicanute, that he welcomed the arrival of his half brother Edward in England.⁶ The son of Ethelred was a more grateful object to the English, than the son of a foreign conqueror. In caressing so kindly a brother so dangerous, Hardicanute displayed a virtue in which, we must remember, that even an Athelstan was wanting. Hardicanute must therefore not pass before us without his meed of praise. Generosity of mind is a noble quality, which promises many other virtues; but without cultivation, how useless are the productive powers of the richest soil! Ulfr was the tutor of Hardicanute,⁷ and Denmark was his academy! He has a right to demand a lenient trial.

His health was frequently assailed by disease;⁸ but he ended his two years reign by an act of intemperance, at a nuptial feast at Lambeth: a copious draught, as he stood in the mirthful company, occasioned him to fall senseless to the ground. He spake no more. He died in June, and was buried with Canute at Winchester.⁹

His death separated the crowns of England and Denmark; and Magnus, the king of Norway, obtained the Danish sceptre.

⁶ Malmsb. 76. Flor. Wig. 403.

⁷ Snorre, Olafi Helga, p. 266.

⁸ Ob morbos etiam quos frequenter patiebatur. Guil. Pict. 179.

⁹ Flor. Wig. 403. Ingulf, 62. MS. Tib.

B. 1. and B. 4. contain passages on his death not in the printed.

CHAP. XIII.

The Reign of Edward the Confessor.

EDWARD, the surviving son of Ethelred, was chosen king of England. While Edward and his brother were friendless exiles, Godwin was their enemy, and even projected their assassination; but became the zealous partisan of Edward, and eagerly assisted to introduce him to the throne, when Canute's issue failed.¹ The king was induced to marry the daughter of Godwin, Editha;² but was neither ardent in his connubial nor filial attentions. At no long period after his coronation, he went, with three earls, suddenly to his mother, and spoiled her of all the property which she possessed.³

Edward was at first menaced with the competition of Magnus, the king of Norway, who had subdued Denmark into obedience; but Magnus found it convenient not to risk the enterprise.

Edward appears to have been an Ethelred without his vices. Feeble in mind, he was incompetent to the task of vigorous

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¹ Ingulf, 62. Malmsbury states at length a sort of bargain which Godwin made with Edward, before he supported him, 80.

² Ingulf knew her, and describes her as very beautiful, meek, modest, faithful, virtuous, and the enemy of no one. She had none of the barbarism of her father and brothers. She was even literis apprime erudita, a lady of learning. He adds, (I cite these little effusions, because they stamp authenticity on the history to which they are appended, by proving its author to be contemporary with its subject) "I have very often seen her, when only a boy. I visited my father in the royal court. Often as I came from school she questioned me on letters and my verse;

and, willingly passing from grammar to logic, she caught me in the subtle nets of argument. I had always three or four pieces of money counted by her maiden, and was sent to the royal larder for refreshment," p. 62. But even this fair rose, as the chroniclers call her, was stained with blood. See further.

³ Flor. 404: Sax. Chron. 157. In the appendix to the Saxon dictionary, a fragment of a Saxon chronicle is quoted e ccd, MS. G. Lambardi exarata in Bib. Ecc. Chr. Canterb. The fragment begins with Edward's reign. I notice it because it is not the same with the printed one, nor with the two MS. ones in the Cotton Library. I shall quote it as Lamb. MS.

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government. So extreme was his simplicity, that he was upon the throne without knowing his regal power. The little story which Malmsbury has transmitted, of his anger against a low peasant, and of his exclaiming to him, "By God! and his mother! I would hurt you *if I was able*,"⁴ shews an ignorance of his authority not easy to be conceived. Men of rank and power, however inferior in understanding, know full well their means of aggression against the unprotected who offend them. But that Edward, though quickened by resentment, should have to find out that he possessed power of punishing an offender, is a circumstance which attaches to his mind a very puerile but harmless simplicity.

His imbecility had however better fortune than that of Ethelred. Ethelred acceded when a boy; faction rent his kingdom; powerful invasions terrified him, and his favourites were traitors. Edward had no external enemy to combat, and his provinces were in the administration of men of talents appointed by his predecessors.⁵ Edward was therefore better governed than Ethelred, and England escaped those tempests which had formerly wrecked it.

But weak reigns are always characterized by one perturbing mischief—the factions of powerful nobles; and Edward's life was marked by this stamp.

1051.

In 1051, Godwin at last presumed to give defiance to the king. The count of Boulogne, who had married Edward's sister, came to Dover. In a foolish effort to obtain or compel entertainment, his followers killed an Englishman. The citizens revenged it; the count, committing himself to the guidance of blind fury, rushed with his troops, killed many of both sexes in the city, and trampled some children under the feet of their horses. Provoked at his brutality, the people armed. The count cowardly fled before their indignation, and went to Edward, who was then at Gloucester.⁶

⁴ Malmsb. 79.

⁵ Ib.

⁶ Flor. 410.

The long residence of Edward in Normandy had occasioned the Norman customs and manners to make great impression on his mind. When he came to the English sceptre, he invited or admitted many Normans into his favour. Robert, one of them, was made, after various promotions, archbishop of Canterbury. Another was raised to an episcopal see, others also attained offices of rank and power. From the king's partiality, the French manners came into use; their language, and their legal forms, began also to be diffused.⁷

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The Norman favourites were unpardonable obstacles to Godwin's ambition. But the sword of useful resistance was not then within his reach. Leofric and Siward were bulwarks to the throne, through which he could not penetrate. He might murmur, but he dared not to rebel.

The frantic revenge of the count of Boulogne, first gave to Godwin a popular plea for a successful insurrection. He raised immediately, from his own counties of Kent, Sussex, and Wessex, a military power. The same occasion enabled his son Svein to collect a powerful force from the counties of Oxford, Gloucester, Hereford, Somerset, and Berks, which he governed; and Harold, another son, embracing the same pretext, completed his formidable array by a levy from Essex, East Anglia, Huntingdon, and Cambridgeshire, which he commanded.

The armies of Godwin and his children could not be completed without Edward's knowledge. Messengers were immediately sent to his brave protectors, Leofric and Siward. These governors were earnestly desired to come, with all the forces they could assemble, with immediate speed.

The loyal earls hastened immediately to court. Learning the necessity, they sent swiftly circulated orders through all their counties, for armies to be raised. The son of the culpable

⁷ Ingulf, 62; and see Malmsbury, 80. on the enmity between Godwin and the Normans.

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count did the same; and Edward had a prospect of being rescued from the tyranny of Godwin.⁸

The rebellious family marched into Gloucestershire, and demanded of the king, under a menace of hostilities, the count of Boulogne and his followers, and the Normans and men of Boulogne, who were in Dover castle.

The king, terrified, knew not how to act; he fluctuated in great anxiety, till he learnt that his friends were prepared to support him. An express refusal was then returned to Godwin.

A fierce civil war seemed now about to consume the country; but Godwin was not heroically adventurous, and Leofric was wise. Leofric felt the misery of causing the best spirits in England to shock in murderous battle on such a cause. He therefore proposed that hostages should be exchanged, and that Godwin and the king should meet on an appointed day in London, and have the alleged subject judicially determined by the witena gemot.⁹

The proposition was too popular not to be accepted. Godwin returned to Wessex; the king ordered a witena gemot¹⁰ to be assembled for the second time in London, at the autumnal equinox; he augmented his army, and marched it to London. Godwin and his sons occupied Southwark.

But Godwin, by this time, found that though Englishmen wished the furious foreigner to be punished, they were not ready to be the heedless instruments of his depraved ambition. The reference to the witena gemot satisfied their resentment; and therefore Godwin, when he came to London to measure strength with the king, discovered that his partisans were falling away.

⁸ Flor. Wig. 410, 411.

⁹ Flor. Wig. 411, 412; and see Sax. Chr. 163, 164; and the MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. I may here state what I here first observed, that the fragment of a Saxon Chronicle, in the appendix to the Saxon dictionary, printed from Lambard's copy in the library at Cam-

bridge, is, as far as it goes, sometimes the same as the MS. Chronicle in the Cotton Library, in Tiberius, B. 4.

¹⁰ Tha gerædde se cyning 7 his witan tha man sceolde oðhre sythan hæbban ealra ge-witena gemot on Lundene to hærfestes em-nihte. Sax. Chron. 164.

The witenagemot made the thanes, who were with Harold, to find pledges to the king for their conduct, and outlawed Svein, who did not think fit to be present at the witenagemot, or consiliary meeting.¹¹ They also cited Godwin and Harold to attend the gemot.

Godwin, who had only used humanity as a convenient veil to cover a larger object, finding his ambitious views darkening, and dreading a legal inquiry into his conduct, did not attempt to face the witen, but fled in the night.¹²

In the morning, the king held the witenagemot, and declared him, his army, and his children, to be outlaws.¹³ Five days of safety were given them to quit the country.¹⁴

With three of his sons, Godwin sailed away, with all the property he could hastily amass, into Flanders. Harold, and a brother from Bristol, sailed to Ireland. A severe tempest put their lives in peril during the voyage. Their sister, the queen, was sent to a monastery.¹⁵

Contrary to every human expectation, and to his own, the star of the house of Godwin seemed now to have fallen from the English hemisphere.¹⁶ The Norman luminary arose in its stead. William, the reigning duke of Normandy, came to England with many of his countrymen, and was received with great honour. He was conducted by Edward to the cities and royal castles. Laden with presents, he returned.¹⁷

Edward was living without a prospect of issue; and, excepting one youth in Hungary, the crown had no heir. The family of William was connected with that of Edward by marriage, and with Edward himself by friendship and services.

¹¹ 7 man borhfast tham cyning ealle tha thegnas the wæron Haroldes eorles his suna, &c. MS. Tib. B. 4. and Lamb. MS.

¹² Sax. Chron. 164. Flor. Wig.

¹³ 7 se cyng hæfd tha on morgen Witenagemot 7 cwæth hine utlage 7 ealle here; hine 7 ealle his suna. MS. Tib. B. 4.

¹⁴ Sax. Chron. 164. 7 sceawede him mann 5 nihta grith ut of lande to farenne.

¹⁵ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. Flor. 412.

¹⁶ The MS. Tib. B. 4. thus expresses the public surprize at the change: "Thæt wolde thyncan wunderlic ælcum men the on Englaude was gif ænig man ær tham sæde tha hit swa gewurtha sceolde. Fortham he was ær to tham swithe upahafen swylce he weolde thæs cynges 7 ealles Englalandes," &c.

¹⁷ Flor. 412. Ingulf, 65. The MS. Tib. B. 4. mentions his coming, which the printed Chronicle omits.

BOOK

VI.

Edward

the

Confessor.

1051.

William was a neighbour, and Edward esteemed him. The family of Godwin was abased, and no competitor seemed likely to arise from the rest of the English. William therefore could scarcely contemplate the throne of his friend, without coveting its acquisition. Any valued good which seems bending to our reach, soon excites our cupidity. He may have had the prudence to mark the hopeful ground in judicious silence; but the scheme of his succession must have been a project which his mind revolved, and secretly prepared to execute.

1052.

The family of Godwin used their exile but as an interval of preparation for successful aggression. Edward had no energies of character capable of counteracting vigorous hostilities. Harold and his brother invaded the West of England with a fleet of adventurers collected in Ireland, defeated the king's officers, and plundered as they pleased. As Godwin was impending with a similar armament, a chosen force of forty ships was stationed at Sandwich to intercept it. He eluded their vigilance, reached Kent, and roused all his friends in the neighbouring counties to arm in his behalf. Pursued by the king's fleet, he sheltered himself in Pevensey; a storm checked the progress of the others, and when they made for London, he hovered about the Isle of Wight, where Harold joined him, after a voyage of plunder. With their united strength, swelled by every aid they could allure, they sailed to Sandwich. Edward found his friends more tardy than before. Godwin sailed, with successful enterprise, to the Thames, and reached Southwark. He demanded the restoration of his family. His display of force intimidated Edward; and to save the shedding of civil blood, Stigand, the archbishop, and the wise men, urged an accommodation. Their recommendation prevailed. The Normans beheld their fate sealed in the pacification, and fled in consternation.

A great council was then convened out of London, and all the earls, and the best men that were in this land, attended

it. Godwin there purged himself before the king, his lord, and all the assembly, that he was guiltless of the crime of which he had been suspected. The king received him in full friendship, and granted to him and to his family a complete restoration of their honours. The Normans were all legally outlawed, because the king's firmness against Godwin had been prompted by them. Svein was the only one of the exiled family who received no benefit from the revolution of its fortunes. He had foully murdered his cousin Beorn, with every aggravated circumstance of abused confidence, and treacherous falsehood. There is a sting in murder which goads the consciousness long after the world has forgiven it, and which no increase of prosperity can destroy. Svein, though six years had passed away since his crime, found it still his torment; and to sooth his sensations, he set off with naked feet on a walking pilgrimage from Flanders to Jerusalem. He died, on his return, in Lycia.¹⁸

CHAP.
XIII.
Edward
the
Confessor.
1052.

The remark of the Hebrew poet, that man disquiets himself for a vain shadow, is often verified in human history. A life is sacrificed to suffering, that a favourite object may be gained. We reach the seat of the felicity we have sighed for, and while our arms are extended to grasp it, we are received into the grave.

1053.
Godwin's
death.

With efforts that risked every comfort he enjoyed, Godwin had meditated new aggrandizement. The guilty project made him an outlaw and a fugitive. By toil and hazard he at last achieved his restoration, and he recovered his prosperity to be deprived of it soon afterwards by death. In 1053, at the Easter festival, the eventful changes of his life were closed. As he sat with the king at table, it is said, that the conversation turned on Alfred's murder, and that Godwin, with many sacred appeals to Divine Providence, denied that he was concerned in it.¹⁹ But whatever was the preceding discourse, the

¹⁸ Sax. Chron. 167, 168. Flor. Wig. 414. ¹⁹ Ingulf, 66. Malmsb. 81. Hunt, 366.

BOOK

VI.

Edward

the

Confessor.

1053.

attack of fate was as irresistible as unexpected. He suddenly lost his speech, and fell from his seat. Harold and two other sons raised him, and carried him to the king's chamber, hoping a recovery. He lingered in helpless and miserable agony, from Monday to Thursday, and then expired.²⁰

It is recorded with pleasure, by the annalists, that Edward took off the heavy tax called Dane gelt.²¹ Ingulf ascribes the remission to the extreme dearth which raged in 1051, and in which so many thousand people perished. Touched with compassion for their sufferings, the king abolished the tax. It is added, that the royal mind, according to some rumours, was impressed the more deeply upon the subject, because one day, when the collected tax was deposited in the treasury, the king was brought to see the vast amount: the mass so affected his imagination, that he fancied he saw a little devil jumping exultingly about it.²² His mind was certainly weak enough to believe such a fancy; and many about him were interested to frame some device that should give it a foundation. He ordered the money to be restored to its former owners, and no more to be raised on such an assessment.

The Welsh had often molested the English provinces in their vicinity. In 1049, thirty-six ships of Irish pirates entered the Severn, and, with the help of Griffith, king of South Wales, obtained considerable successes.²³ In 1052, Griffith ravaged great part of Herefordshire, defeated the provincials, and obtained great plunder.²⁴

The death of Godwin rather exalted than abased his family. His character was tainted. He was approaching the feebleness

²⁰ Flor. Wig. 415. The MS. Tib. B. 4. like the printed chronicle, merely states his death; but the MS. Tib. B. 1. describes it like Florence, thus: "Sæt he mid than cynincge æt gereorde tha wæringa sah he nither with thæs fotsetles spræce benumen 7 ealre his mihte 7 hine man tha bræd into thæs kinges bure 7 thohtan tha hit ofergan sceolde ac hit næs na swa ac thurh wunode

swa unspecende 7 mihtleas forth oth thone thunres dæg 7 tha his lif alet."

²¹ Flor. Wig. 410. Hoveden, 441.

²² Ingulf, 65. Hoveden tells a similar story, and makes the queen and her brother Harold the persons who took the king to the treasury.

²³ Flor. Wig. 409.

²⁴ Flor. Wig. 412.

of age, without having secured its reverence. He had no influence but from his power; and greatness, which is only secured by terror, or extorted by force, is the creature of casualty, which the first tempest may destroy. But Harold had all the brilliancy of youth and active courage: his character was full of promise, because, being born to dignity, he had sullied himself by no arts to attain it. There was a generous ardour in his actions which compelled admiration. When Edward raised him to his father's dignities, he gave new lustre to his family, and obtained all the influence to which his father had aspired.²⁵

CHAP.
XIII.
Edward
the
Confessor.
1053.

When Harold received the honours of Godwin, his own dignities in Essex and East Anglia were given to Algar, the son of the deserving and patriotic Leofric. But Algar's rise to power was no pleasing omen to the family of Godwin. Three years afterwards he was made a victim. He was banished in 1055, without a fault.²⁶

But Algar was too injured to be inactive: he fled to Ireland, collected eighteen piratical vessels, and interested Griffith, the king of Wales, in his favour. With this aid, he suddenly appeared in Hereford with great success; and though Harold went to oppose him, yet such was the state of Edward's court and councils, that, by his treasonable violence, Algar regained his honour. His allies went to Leicester, and were remunerated by his father. In 1058, he was exiled again, and by the same means restored.²⁷

The Welsh made great efforts against the Anglo-Saxons in this reign. If any other feeling than personal ambition had actuated the British leaders, they must have discerned, that however feeble the Saxon king may have been, yet, from the

²⁵ The great wealth of the family may be seen in Domesday book, where Godwin's possessions are often mentioned.

²⁶ Flor. 416. MS. Tib. B. 1. Butan ælcān gylte, and MS. Tib. B. 4. for neh butan gylte.

The printed chronicle says, that he was charged with treason, p. 169. Ingulf gives to Algar the aid of a Norwegian fleet, p. 66.

²⁷ Flor. 417—420.

comparative state of the two nations, transient depredations were the utmost that the valour of Wales could achieve. Such bounded triumphs were, however, certain of being followed at last by a powerful revenge. Griffith, for some years, molested, with good fortune, the counties near Wales, and for some years his aggressions escaped unchastised. In the year after he first reinstated Algar, his new insults, which occasioned the death of Harold's priest, just raised to a bishopric,²⁸ were again connived at by a peace; and in 1058 he again restored Algar; but in 1063, the storm of vengeance began to collect. Harold resolved upon his punishment, and there was nothing to restrain the full exercise of his ability. He marched into Wales with power; Griffith fled; Harold burnt his palace and ships, and returned. In the beginning of summer he circumnavigated Wales with a marauding fleet, while his brother Tostig marched over it by land. The Welsh submitted with hostages and tribute, and banished the obnoxious Griffith, who soon after perished.²⁹

The means by which Harold obtained such immediate and decisive success are stated to have been a change of the armour of his soldiers. In heavy armour, the Saxons were unable to pursue the Welsh to their recesses. Harold observed this impediment to their success, and commanded them to use leathern armour and lighter weapons. By this arrangement, wherever the Britons could retreat, his men could pursue. He crossed their snowy mountains, defeated them on their plains, and multiplied destruction, till terror and feebleness produced general subjection.³⁰ He raised heaps of stones wherever he had obtained victory, with this inscription:

²⁸ Flor. 418. The MS. Tib. B. 1. says of this bishop, that he would forego his spiritual arms, and take to his sword and spear, and go against Griffith: "Se forlet his crisman 7 his hrode, his gastlican wæpna 7 feng to his spere 7 to his sweorde, æfter his biscuphade, 7 swa for to fyrde ongean Griffin," &c.

²⁹ Flor. 424. Ingulf, 68. MS. Lamb. Sax. Chron. 170. The head of Griffith was brought to Harold.

³⁰ Ingulf, 68. This invasion is fully stated by the elegant John of Salisbury, whose writings reflect so much credit on the twelfth century. See his *De Nugis Curialium*, l. 6. c. 6. p. 185.

"Here Harold conquered." Such a depopulation of Wales ensued from his invasion, that to this disastrous cause Giraldus ascribes the tranquil acquiescence of the Britons under the Norman yoke.³¹ Harold closed his efforts by a law, that every Briton found beyond Offa's Dike with a missile weapon, should lose his right hand.³²

CHAP.
XIII.
Edward
the
Confessor.
1053.

Macbeth, the usurper of Scotland, condemned, by the genius of Shakespear, to share for ever our sympathy and our abhorrence, was partly contemporary with Edward. In 1039, Duncan, after a five year's reign, was assassinated by Macbeth.³³

Macbeth
defeated by
Siward.

The two sons of Duncan, Malcolm, surnamed Cean-more, or the Great-head, and Donald, called Bane, or the Fair, fled from Scotland. Malcolm sought refuge in Cumberland, and Donald in the Hebrides.³⁴

Eleven years after his usurpation, Macbeth is mentioned by the chroniclers of England, as distributing money at Rome.³⁵ In 1054, while Macduff, the thane of Fife, was exciting a formidable revolt in Scotland, Siward, by some called the Giant, from his large size, and whose sister had been Duncan's queen, conducted his Northumbrians against Macbeth. A furious conflict followed, in which thousands of both armies perished; but Siward, though he lost his son and nephew, defeated the usurper. He returned with great plunder, having made Malcolm king.³⁶

The glory of a warrior was the felicity most precious to Siward. On his return, at York, he felt that an internal disease

³¹ Giraldus Cambriensis de illaudab. Wallie, c. 7. p. 431.

³² Joan. Salisb. de Nugis Cur. p. 185.

³³ Mailros, 156. Duncan, in 1035, had been foiled in an attack upon Durham. Sim. Dun. 33. Lord Hailes says: "It is probable that the assassins lay in ambush, and murdered him at a smith's house in the neighbourhood of Elgin." Annals, p. 1.

³⁴ Hailes' Annals of Scotland, p. 2.

³⁵ "1050. Rex Scotorum Machethad Romæ argentum spargendo distribuit." Flor.

Wig. 409. So Sim. Dun. 184. and Hoveden, 441. Mailros, who names him Macbeth, p. 157, has a similar passage.

³⁶ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. Lamb. MS. Flor. Wig. 416. MS. Tib. B. 1. Lord Hailes, from Fordun, states, that "Macbeth retreated to the fastnesses of the North, and protracted the war. His people forsook his standard. Malcolm attacked him at Lunfannan in Aberdeenshire. Abandoned by his few remaining followers, Macbeth fell 5th of December, 1056." Annals, p. 3.

BOOK

VI.

Edward

the

Confessor.

1055.

was consuming his vitality, and he sighed for the funereal trophies of a field of battle. "I feel disgraced that I should have survived so many combats, to perish now like a cow: Clothe me in my mail, fasten on my sword, and give me my shield and my battle-axe, that I may expire like a soldier."³⁷

In 1057, England lost Leofric, the duke of Mercia, by whose wisdom the reign of Edward was preserved from many perils and disorders, which the ambition of others would have introduced. His councils and government have been much celebrated.³⁸ His son Algar succeeded to his dukedom.³⁹

On Siward's death, in 1055, Tostig, the brother of Harold, was appointed earl of Northumbria. By inducing the queen to cause some Northumbrian nobles to be treacherously killed; by repeating the same atrocity himself at York, and by exacting a large tribute from the county; Tostig so alienated the minds of the provincials, that they revolted in 1065, expelled him, and seized his treasures. The insurgents invited Morcar, the son of Algar, and chose him for their earl. At the head of the men of Northumberland, Morcar marched southward, and was joined by an armed force from other counties, and from Wales. Harold met him at Northampton with military array, but it was deemed prudent to comply with a request so powerfully supported; Morcar was confirmed in the earldom, and the laws of Canute were restored. Tostig fled with his wife and friends to Flanders, where Baldwin entertained them.⁴⁰

1066.

Edward, soon after these transactions, began to sicken. At Christmas, he held his court at London, and dedicated the

³⁷ Rad. Dic. 477.

³⁸ Flor. Wig. 419. Ingulf, 66.

³⁹ Leofric had another son, named Hereward, whose life seemed devoted to the task of supplying incidents to the genius of romance and heroic song.—See a further account of him in the chapter on the Anglo-

Saxon chivalry, in the second volume of this work. Hereward is also mentioned in the book de Pontificibus, 3 Gale, 372.

⁴⁰ See the printed Saxon Chronicle, p. 171. Flo. Wig. 427. the MS. Chronicles, Tib. B. 1. and B. 4.

church of St. Peter at Westminster, which he had rebuilt. On the eve of the Epiphany, the hand of death came upon him, and he was buried the day following at Westminster.⁴¹

CHAP.
XIII.
Edward
the
Confessor.

1066.

In person, Edward was tall and well made; his hair and skin were remarkably white; his complexion rosy.⁴² His mind was weak; but in general, unless acted upon by others, his disposition was well meaning. He was averse to the imposition of taxes; abstinent in his diet; and on the public feast days, though by the care of the queen he was sumptuously arrayed, he assumed no haughtiness of manner in his pomp. His time was chiefly divided between his prayers and hunting, to which he was greatly attached. His charities were frequent and extensive;⁴³ and though his reign reflected no honour on his ancestry, he was so fortunate as to escape any striking disgrace.

As, after this reign, the history of England became much connected with the dukedom of Normandy, a few sentences may be inserted on its origin, and taken chiefly from Northern documents.

Origin of the
dukes of
Normandy.

Harald Harfragre, having subdued all the fylki of Norway, appointed earls to govern his conquests. Of these earls, Rognvalldr, in the Mæra islands, was a favourite whom he peculiarly honoured. Rognvalldr had two legitimate children, Thorer and Rolfr, called Gaungo Rolfr, the walking Rolfr,⁴⁴ who is better known by his more celebrated name, Rollo.

Rolfr became a great vikingr, and frequently infested the Baltic; but in the midst of his exploits, Harald prohibited

⁴¹ MS. Tib. B. 1. and 4. Flor. Wig. 427. and Sax. Chron. 171. Both the MS. Chronicles have a long addition in Saxon, which follows his death. It begins, "Her Edward kingc, Engla hlaforð, sende soðfeste," &c. This is not in Lamb. MS.

⁴² Malmsb. 91. Rossi Hist. reg. Angl. 105.

⁴³ Malmsb. 91. His memory was cano-

nized, and many monkish miracles have been appended to it. Some of these excite our laughter; others would suit an Arabian tale.

⁴⁴ Snorre says, he was so tall, that no horse could carry him; therefore he walked wherever he went, p. 100. If the horses of Norway resemble those of the Shetland breed, this is not improbable.

piracy. The power as well as the edict of Harald was new, and men are generally reluctant to lay aside favourite habits. Returning from an excursion, he arrived at Vikia, and plundered it; but at that very crisis Harald was in Vikia. Enraged at this contempt of his authority, rendered more flagrant by his own presence, he banished Rolfr from Norway. In vain his mother solicited a remission of the sentence.⁴⁵ Harald was inexorable; and Rolfr, flying to the Hebrides, abandoned for ever his native Baltic.

But Rolfr possessed those abilities which create epochs in the history of man. Adversity only exercises, improves, and directs to new objects such talents as he had inherited. Driven from his paternal shores, he resolved to seek not merely an asylum, but a kingdom elsewhere. His first attempt was on England, in the days of Alfred; but a genius even greater than his own presided there: he wintered and withdrew:⁴⁶ he then assailed Frisia,⁴⁷ and afterwards France; but he was at first lost in the herd of savage competitors, who were there glutting their ferocity and cupidity. He ventured on England again; and at last, when the theatre of ambition was less occupied by others, he collected a powerful force, and attacked France. Charles the Simple was then reigning. After much successful valour, he obtained, in 911, the country for which he fought. Charles, by the mediation of the archbishop of Rheims, satisfied his ambition by ceding to him all the maritime country, from the river Andelle, three leagues above Rouen, to the Epte, which passes by Gournay, Gisors, and St. Clair, and also the country beyond the Seine. This cession comprehended all that country

⁴⁵ Snorre's Haralld's Saga, c. 24. p. 100, 101. He has given the intreaties of Hilda, the mother of Rollo, in an Icelandic stanza, seems to intimate some successes at first; but his departure is evidence of an ultimate failure.

⁴⁶ Asser, p. 28; Dudo, p. 71; and Gemmetensis, p. 223, claim two victories for him in England. His residence for a winter

⁴⁷ Dudo, 74; and Gemmet. 226. They talk of Athelstan aiding, which is impossible in chronology.

between the sea, Brittany, and the Maine.⁴⁸ Rolfr, whose name, in the French annalists, became softened to Rollo, also married Gisla, the king's daughter, and for all these favours became Christian.⁴⁹

CHAP.
XIII.

Rollo conducted himself like a prince worthy of a kingdom. His acquisition, which soon after assumed the name of Normandy, was carefully improved. He made wise laws; he coerced plunder. To bring population, he gave security to all nations who were desirous to settle in his province. He rebuilt the churches, divided his lands among his followers, raised the destroyed habitations, refortified the cities, and revived the agriculture of the country.⁵⁰ By great exertions, he at last humanized the minds of his Northmen to the love of order, justice, productive property, and domestic peace. He therefore merits to be classed with that venerable and illustrious society, who, in various periods and different climes, have civilized and disciplined their untutored countries.

Rollo died in 931, and his son William succeeded.⁵¹ After two other reigns, Robert acceded, the father of the William who contended with Harold for the throne of England.

⁴⁸ Daniel Hist. de France, 219. Gemmet. 231. describes this country as then, ob diuturnos paganorum excursus, sylvis undique adultis, a cultro et vomere torpebat inculta. Rollo refused Flanders ostensibly, præ paludum impeditio; perhaps also, because it was already occupied.

⁴⁹ But what sort of Christians they became, we may learn from the correspondence between pope John IX. and Harvey, the archbishop of Rheims. The archbishop complained that the Normans, after they

had been baptized, killed the Christian priests, sacrificed to idols, and ate of such things as had been offered in sacrifice to them. Dupin. Eccles. Hist. 10 century, v. 8. p. 15. Engl. ed.

⁵⁰ Gemmet. l. 2. c. 19. p. 232. The Britons, from whom he compelled the first subsistence of his colony, were ruined by his hostilities. Chron. Frodoardi, 8 Bouquet, 176. Chron. Namnetense. Ib. p. 275.

⁵¹ Gemmet. 233.

C H A P. XIV.

The Reign of Harold the Second, the Son of Godwin; and the last of the Anglo-Saxon Kings.

BOOK
VI.
Harold
the Second.

Competition
between
Harold and
William.

EDWARD had intended to appoint his cousin Edward, the son of Edmund Ironside, the successor to his crown. This prince had continued in Hungary since Canute had sought his life. Called from thence by Edward the Confessor, he came to England in 1057, but died soon after his arrival.¹

The death of this prince confirmed in two men the hopes of attaining the Anglo-Saxon sceptre. Harold, and William duke of Normandy, after this event, looked forward to the splendid prize with equal ardour.

Harold had sworn to William to assist him in ascending the throne of England; but afterwards pleaded that his oaths had been extorted by irresistible force. William, having had him once in his power, compelled him to swear. This charge thus answered, the rivals were in other respects on a level. Both claimed from Edward a gift or testamentary appointment in his favour;² both had been in Edward's friendship, and the

¹ Flor. Wig. 419.

² That Harold was appointed by Edward to succeed him, is asserted or intimated by the printed Saxon Chronicle, 172. By Flor. Wig. 427. Hoveden, 447. Sim. Dun. 194. Al. Bev. 122. Malmsbury informs us that this was the statement of the English (Angli dicant a rege concessum, 93.) but he thinks it was rather the rumour of partiality than of judgment. On the other side, the Annales Margenses, p. 1.; Wike's Chron. p. 22.; Malmsb. 93.; and the Norman writers; declare, that Edward gave the kingdom to William. The MS. Chronicles which affirm this are, Peter de Ickham, Domit. A. 3. (Willo duci Normanniæ consanguineo suo sicut ei prius juramento promiserat regnum teste dedit. So Will. Sheepheved, Faust.

B. 6. (adoptavit in regnum Willielmum ducem Normannorum.) So Th. Elmham, Claud. E. 5. (Willielmum ducem Normanniæ adoptavit heredem.) So Hermannus says, it was the rumor plurimum that Edward appointed the kingdom to William. Many other MS. Chronicles affirm as much, as Chron. ab adv. Sax. ad Hen. 4. Nero, A. 6.; Chron. S. Martini de Dover a Bruto ad Hen. 2. Vespasian, B. 11.; Chron. de Bruto ad 1346. Cleop. D. 2; Chron. de Hale's ab initio mundi ad 1304. Cleop. D. 3; Annales de Gest. Angl. ad 1377. Cleop. D. 9; Hist. brevis. ending temp. Ed. 2. Domit. A. 8.; the Hist. Abb. Claud. B. 6. We may add the words of William himself, who, in one of his charters, says: "Devicto Haraldo rege cum suis complicitibus qui michi regnum prudentia

family of Harold, as well as the family of William, had been connubially allied to him.

CHAP.
XIV.
Harold
the Second.

There is perhaps no great event in our annals in which the truth is more difficult to be elicited, than in the transaction between Harold and William in the lifetime of Edward. We will state first the account of Harold and his friends, and contrast it with the Norman story.

In revolving the history of the friends of Harold, we meet with the unpleasing circumstance of two narrations upon the subject, which counteract each other. According to some, Harold accidentally sailed in a little fishing excursion from Bosham in Sussex, and was driven, by a sudden tempest, on the opposite shore.³ According to others, Harold went to the continent not accidentally, but deliberately. Two of his brothers had been committed by Edward, during the rebellion of Godwin, to the care of William. Harold wished to procure their release, and for that purpose requested permission of Edward to visit William in Normandy. The appendage to this account is, that Edward dissuaded him in vain; and that when Harold returned, and stated to him that William had detained and made him swear to give him the English crown, the king reminded him, that he had foreseen the misfortune.*

The Norman historians declare, that on the death of the son of Edmund Ironside, who had been invited from Hungary, Edward obeyed the dictates of personal regard, and appointed William to be his successor; that he sent Harold to announce to him this disposition, and that Harold, sailing to Flanders for the purpose of travelling to the Norman court on this important

domini destinatur et beneficio concessionis domini et cognati mei gloriosi regis Edwardi concessum, conati sunt auferre. Faustina, A. 3. The authorities are too contradictory to decide the question.

³ Matt. Paris, p. 2. Matt. West. 426; and from him Bever. in his MS. Chron. in

the Harleian Library, 641. Malmesbury mentions it as a report.

⁴ Eadmer, 4. Al. Bev. 125. Sim. Dun. 195. Bromton, 947. Rad. Dic. 479. Walt. Hemingford, 456. I believe Hemingford's Chronicle is the same with the Chronica Will. de Giseburne, in the Cotton Library, Tiberius, B. 4. Higden, 283.

mission, was thrown by a tempest on the coast of the count of Ponthieu, who seized and imprisoned him.⁵

To these circumstances it is added, that before Edward sent Harold, he had commissioned Robert the Norman, the archbishop of Canterbury, to make to William the same annunciation.

This last assertion however cannot for a moment be believed, because Robert was exiled from England in the year 1052, on Godwin's reconciliation. He went to Normandy not on public business, but fled with precipitation to secure his personal safety;⁶ and so far was Edward from having adopted William in 1052; that in 1057, the son of Edmund Ironside came to England on Edward's express invitation, and for the avowed purpose of being his successor. It is also hostile to the tale of Robert's mission, that William was himself in England after Godwin's rebellion, the year before Robert left it. If Edward had then determined on William's succession, it is more probable that he should have imparted his intention to William himself, than that in the next year he should have sent it in a message by a fugitive. The testimony of Ingulf of Croyland, is also adverse. He expressly declares, that while William was in England, he received no hopes of the succession; it was not then mentioned.⁷ Robert may have exerted himself in nurturing William's secret wishes. He may, in revenge to the family of Godwin, have commenced intrigues in favour of William; but it is not credible that Edward thought of William as his successor until after the death of his cousin from Hungary.

⁵ Ingulf, a contemporary writer, p. 68. Guil. Pictav. 191. Will. Gemmet. 285. Orderic. Vital. 492. Ann. Petrob. 45. Walsingham Ypod. 28. Wike's Chron. 22. and many of the MS. Chronicles.

⁶ Sax. Chron. 168. and the fuller Chronicle quoted there, 167. Hoveden, 443.

⁷ De successione autem regni spes adhuc aut mentio nulla facta inter eos fuit. Ingulf, 65. Ingulf describes himself as born in England, and as having studied at West-

minster and Oxford. When William visited Edward, Ingulf joined his train, and sailed with him to Normandy; he became his secretary, and a sort of favourite. He went to Jerusalem through Germany and Greece, and returned by sea to Rome. He says, that he and his companions went out thirty fat horsemen, and returned scarcely twenty, and emaciated pedestrians. He attended William to England, 73—75.

The celebrated tapestry of Bayeux presents to us the Norman account of these transactions.

In the cathedral church of Bayeux in Normandy, this ancient monument has been preserved: "The ground of this piece of work is, a white linen cloth or canvass, one foot eleven inches in depth, and 212 feet in length. The figures of men, horses, &c. are in their proper colours, worked in the manner of samplers, in worsted, and of a style not unlike what we see upon China and Japan ware; those of the men more particularly being without the least symmetry or proportion." It is in one piece; it was annually hung up and exposed to view, in the nave of the church, from the eve of Midsummer-day, and continued there for eight days. At all other times it was carefully locked up.⁸

This tapestry is called, by the tradition of the country, "La toilette du duc Guillaume."¹⁰ The same popular account ascribes it to his queen, Mathilda, and her work-women.¹¹ It has been engraved, and may be seen among the plates of the Academie des Inscriptions, and in Ducarel's Anglo-Norman Antiquities.

It represents the transactions between Harold and William. The first figures are, a king with a sceptre sitting upon his throne; his right hand is pointed towards two men, as if giving them orders. Above is an inscription of two words, "Edward.

⁸ Ducarel's Anglo Norman Antiquities, p. 79. M. Lancelot has written two memoirs on this tapestry, in the Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, t. 9. p. 535—561; and t. 12. p. 369—469. M. Lancelot's description is thus: "C'est un piece de toile de lin de dix neuf pouces de haut, sur deux cens dix pieds onze pouces de long, sur la quelle on a tracé des figures avec de la laine couchée et croisée a peu pres comme on hache une premiere pensée au crayon." p. 370.

⁹ Lancelot, p. 371. Ducarel, 79. I am not certain where this tapestry is now. At the commencement of the present war, while the invasion of these islands was in agitation,

Bonaparte had this tapestry conveyed to Paris, for his own inspection. A comet having appeared about that time, he is said to have observed, with great earnestness, the comet represented in the tapestry.

¹⁰ Lancelot, 371. This gentleman says of it: "L'extrémité commence a se gater." This occasioned the Chapter to have it copied.

¹¹ Lancelot, 373. William of Poitou declares, that the English ladies excelled at their needle, and in gold embroidery. Ib. 375. Lancelot thinks, "qu'elle ne peut etre d'un siecle posterieur a celui de Guillaume," 374. Mathilda died in 1083. Ib. 377.

Rex."¹² This has been fairly thought to portray Edward, directing Harold to go to Normandy. It therefore illustrates the Norman account, that Harold was sent by Edward to William.¹³

The next figures are, five men on horseback, preceded by a cavalier with a bird in his left hand, and with five dogs running before him. The inscription to this is, "Ubi Harold dux Anglorum et sui milites equitant ad Bosham." The dogs and the bird mark the cavalier to be a nobleman, and of course to be Harold, who is proceeding with his train to Bosham.¹⁴

A church follows, before which are two men with bending knees. Above is the word "Ecclesia." After this is an apartment where men are drinking, one from a horn, another from a goblet.

Two men are descending from this place of refreshment, one of them with an oar. A person with an oar is standing next. Another holds a dog in his arm, looking towards a ship, close to which is Harold, with a dog under his arm, and a bird in his left hand. The inscription is, "Hic Harold mare navigavit." It of course represents Harold embarking at Bosham in Sussex.¹⁵

Two ships follow in full sail. The remark of Lancelot is just, that in their equipments they are not at all like fishing vessels. The words are, "Et velis vento plenis venit in terra Widonis Comititis."

The next figures represent Harold becoming the prisoner

¹² Lancelot, 378.

¹³ Il faut observer la simplicité du trône du Roi Edward semblable à celle que nous représentent les sceaux et les autres monumens qui nous restent de ces tems là. Les bras du trône sont terminés par une tête de Chien—Ceux des Empereurs d'Allemagne avoient ordinairement un Lion. Son sceptre est terminée en fleuron, p. 541.

¹⁴ The tapestry has sustained some injury at the beginning of this inscription. Lan.

378. "C'étoit alors l'usage de la noblesse de marcher ou en équipage de guerre quand il y avoit quelque expédition à faire ou en équipage de chasse quand la guerre ne l'occupoit point—La noblesse seule avoit le droit de porter l'Epervier ou le Faucons sur le poing," p. 543.

¹⁵ Walter Mapes informs us of the punning trick by which Godwin got Bosham from the archbishop of York. See it in Camden and Lancelot, p. 545.

of Guy, the count of Ponthieu, who carries him to Belre,¹⁶ and detains him. The inscriptions will explain the figures which follow: "Here Harold and Guy converse; here the messengers of William came to Guy; here a messenger comes to William; here Guy conducted Harold to William, duke of the Normans; here William proceeds with Harold to his palace."

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the Second.

This part of the tapestry portrays the history as given in the chronicles. When Harold was detained by Guy, on whose coasts the winds impelled him, he sent information to William, whose menaces and gifts produced his release.¹⁷

That William conducted Harold to Rouen, the chief city of his dominions, is the assertion of a contemporary chronicler.¹⁸ The tapestry says, to his palace, and exhibits a kind of hall, where a chief upon his throne, resting one hand on his sword, is attending to a person in the attitude of speaking, behind whom are some armed men. It is most likely Harold addressing William on the subject of his excursion; but there is no inscription on this part of the tapestry.

The next figures represent William's warfare with Conan, a count of Bretagne, in which Harold assisted.¹⁹ The inscrip-

¹⁶ This was, says M. Lancelot, Beaurain le Chateau, two leagues from Monstreuil, castrum de Bello ramo, p. 555. Le Roman de Rou par Robert Waice, est le seul des Auteurs de ce tems la qui, en rapportant la circonstance de la prison de Harold a Beaurain, confirme ce qu'en dit le monument dont il s'agit :

"Guy garda Heralt par grant cure,
Mout en creust mesaventure,
A Belrem le fit envoyer
Pour fere le Duc esloingnier," p. 379.

¹⁷ In the tapestry, William is on his throne, with his sword in his left hand, his right is extended close to the face of a man, who is listening or speaking to him in a deprecating and intimidated manner. Lancelot

says, "deux vers du Roman de Rou expriment ce que le Duc faisoit en cette occasion :

"Tant pramist au Comte et offri,
Tant manacha et tant blandi,
Que Guy Heralt au Duc rendi."

Ce sont les menaces qu'il semble que la tapisserie a voulu designer, p. 381.

¹⁸ Guil. Pictav.

¹⁹ See Lancelot, 388—401, on William and Harold's war in Bretagne. William of Poitiers is the only historian who has at all detailed this warfare, "mais il s'en faut beaucoup que son recit ne soit aussi circonstancie que ce qui se voit dans la tapisserie," p. 389. Lancelot's Observations on the weapons of the combatants are worth reading.

tions are: "Here duke William and his army came to Mount St. Michael, and passed the river Cosno;²⁰ here Harold duke drew them from the sand; and they came to Dol, and Conan fled. Here the soldiers of duke William fought against the Dinantes,²¹ and Conan extended the keys."

All these circumstances are very expressively told by appropriate figures, which give a curious delineation of the military equipments and manners of the period.

The events which follow are peculiarly interesting to us. William, in complete armour, extends one hand to Harold's right temple; his other is upon Harold's right arm and breast. Harold is a little inclining towards him, and supports a lance with a banner in his left hand. The words above are, "Here William gave arms to Harold." A Norman historian mentions, that William rewarded the exertions of Harold with splendid arms, horses, and other insignia.²²

After three horsemen in armour, with the letters, "Here William comes to Bagias," (Bayeux) William appears without armour on his throne with a sword, his left hand extended. Near this are two repositories of relics. Harold is between them, with a hand on each. Officers are at both ends. The inscription is: "Here Harold swears to Duke William."

The historians state, that Harold swore to promote William's accession to the throne of England on Edmund's demise, to marry his daughter, and to put Dover into his power.²³ Some other authorities mention that William, after Harold had sworn,

²⁰ C'est la riviere de Couesnon qui separe encore a present la Normandie de la Bretagne. Lan. 396. Les flots de la mer et les sables font changer souvent le lit de cette riviere, ce qui rend le gué difficile. La Tapisserie represente le passage de cette riviere par les troupes de Guillaume avec une exactitude tres detaillée. Ib. 397.

²¹ This circumstance the tapestry only has preserved. "C'est la prise de Dinan ville de Bretagne a six lieues de Dol: aucun historien du tems n'en a parlé." Lan. 399.

²² Order. Vital. l. 3. p. 492. Le Roman

de Rou places the ceremony at Avranches (Aurences) when the duke was going to Bretagne. Lan. 402.

²³ Guil. Pictav. says this on the evidence of eyewitnesses: "Sicut veracissimi multa que honestate præclarissimi homines recitavere qui tunc affuere testes," p. 191. He is so angry with Harold for his subsequent breach of this oath, that he apostrophizes to him with great warmth, p. 192. Both Pictav. and Ord. Vital. 492. place the oath before the war in Bretagne. On the oath see Ingulf, Malmsb. M. Paris, Eadmer, and others.

uncovered the repositories, and shewed him on what relics he had pledged himself; and Harold saw, with alarm, their number and importance.²⁴ If this be true, these two great warriors were, at least in their religion, men of petty minds, or they would not have believed that the obligation of an oath was governed by the rules of arithmetical progression.

The tapestry represents a ship under sail, expressive of Harold's return, and afterwards Harold making his report to Edward. The king's sickness and funeral follow.²⁵

The next figures shew Harold's coronation. One man offers him the crown; another a battle-axe. Beyond this, Harold appears on his throne, with the globe and cross in his left hand, and a sceptre in his right. On his right two men are presenting to him a sword; and Stigant, the archbishop, is standing on his left.²⁶

On the evening of Edward's funeral, which was the day after his death, Harold possessed himself of the crown of England. As there were other pretenders to the dignity, of whom one at least, Edgar Etheling, the grandson of Edmund Ironside, was invested with the interesting right of hereditary descent, delay was perilous to the ambition of Harold.²⁷ Hence, while the nobles were agitated with divided minds, Harold boldly decided the splendid question by availing himself of the support of his friends,²⁸ and by obtaining an instantaneous coronation from the suspended archbishop of Canterbury.²⁹

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the Second.

Harold's
coronation.
1067.

²⁴ So the Roman de Rou, and la Chronique de Normandie affirm. Lanc. 404, 405. I may here mention that the author of the Roman is stated to be Robert Waice; that he lived about fifty years after the conquest, and was a canon of Bayeaux. Lan. 379.

²⁵ The figures of the funeral seem to precede the sickness.

²⁶ The inscriptions are: "Here they gave the crown to king Harold: here sits Harold, king of the English; Stigant, archbishop."

²⁷ Matthew says, some of the proceres favoured William; some Harold; and some Edgar, the grandson of Edmund Ironside; but that Harold, extorta fide a majoribus,

obtained the diadem, 433. Malmsbury intimates a violent seizure, p. 93. So Rudborne, p. 24. Ordericus says, he was consecrated sine communi consensu aliorum præsulum et comitum procerumque, p. 492. and see Matt. West. 433. and M. Paris, 2.

²⁸ Florence, Hoveden, Simeon of Durham, Rad. Dic. and Saxon Chronicle, imply, that a very large part, if not all, of the nobles chose him. The tapestry, which certainly tells the story in the Norman way, hints nothing of a violent seizure. It represents two men offering the crown to Harold, who is uncovered.

²⁹ Though most of the writers say that

That Harold used his authority with kingly dignity, and for the great ends of public utility, is asserted,³⁰ and must be admitted, with the qualification that as his reign was so short, the panegyric must be referred to his intentions rather than to his actions. It is, however, essential to an usurper to be popular; and human ingenuity cannot invent a spell more potent to arrest the favour of its contemporaries, than the practice of virtue. All rulers, whose right to power is ambiguous, and whose possession of it depends on the public support, will affect to govern awhile with equity and popularity. The true character of Harold cannot therefore be judged from his actions in the emergency of competition; and he perished before the virtues of his disposition could be distinguished from those of his convenience.

It is amusing to remark how industrious the chroniclers of this period have been to record, that a comet appeared this year in the heavens, and that it foreboded the revolutions of greatness, and the bloodshed which ensued.³¹ The popular impression produced by this comet is shewn by its having been worked in the tapestry of Bayeux. This relic of ancient times contains, immediately after Harold's coronation, a rude figure of the comet, with several persons gazing at it with eager eyes and pointing hands.³²

The enjoyment of a favourite felicity is seldom the consequence of its violent acquisition. Harold found his crown full of the thorns which poets and moralists have been fond of describing. Three competitors prepared at the same time to

the archbishop of York crowned him; yet, as the tapestry shews Harold on his throne, and Stigant, who held Canterbury, near him; and as Guil. Pictav. 196. and Ord. Vitalis, state that Stigant crowned him, I adopt this opinion, which M. Lancelot supports, 421.

³⁰ As Hoveden, Florence, and others. Malmsbury, 93, admits it.

³¹ Will. Gem. p. 285.; Matt. West. 439.; and many annalists. I believe that above ninety comets have been remarked in the heavens.

³² The inscription over the men is: Isti mirant stella. The MS. Chronicles, Tib. B. 1. and B. 4. thus mention the comet: "Tha wearthgeond eall Engla land swylc tacen on heofenum gesewen swylc nan man er ne geseah. Sume men cwedon tha hit cometa se steorra waere thone sume men hatath thone Fixedon steorran ⁊ he aetowde ærest on thone æfen Letania major 8 K mai ⁊ swa sean ealle tha seofon niht."

wrestle with him for it: each was formidable enough to have endangered his prosperity, but the combination of their hostilities could have hardly failed to overpower him.

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Harold
the Second.
1066.

The rivals of Harold were, his brother Tostig, William duke of Normandy, and Haralld Hardrada, the king of Norway. The two last were sovereigns of long established authority and great military experience; and came with peculiar advantage into a conflict with Harold, whose ancestry was obscure, whose power was young, whose title was questionable, and whose friends were but a party in the nation which he governed.

Tostig was a man of talents and activity, but his fraternal relation gave to his hostilities a peculiar venom. He had been expelled from Northumbria in a preceding reign, and he had not been recalled by Harold. His discontent and envy were fostered by William, who embraced the policy of multiplying the enemies and of dividing the strength of Harold.

Eager to oppress his more fortunate brother, Tostig attempted, but in vain, to excite the king of Denmark to attack him. On the mind of Haralld Hardrada, king of Norway, he operated with more success. The Norwegian consented to invade England in the summer.³³

Tostig went to Flanders, to prepare the means of an aggression of his own. He visited William of Normandy, of whose ambition he was made a convenient instrument.³⁴ He collected all the English who were willing to join him; he raised many supplies from Flanders,³⁵ and with sixty ships proceeded to the English coast.

Tostig's
invasion.

He levied contributions from the Isle of Wight, and plundered along the coast till he reached Sandwich. Harold was then at London. He collected a very numerous fleet and army, because he perceived that his brother's force was but the advanced guard of William. When Harold reached

³³ Snorre, vol. 3, p. 146—149. W. Gemmet, 285.

³⁴ Order. Vital. 492.

³⁵ Snorre, 150.

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Sandwich, Tostig, whose friends were chiefly in the north, sailed hastily for Lincolnshire, and committed many ravages on Lindesey. The earls of Mercia and Northumbria allowed him no time to collect support, but commenced an immediate opposition.³⁶ Tostig, defeated by their energy, fled to Scotland, with twelve ships,³⁷ to wait the arrival of his allies, and Malcolm gave him an asylum.

The first arrow of calamity was thus happily averted from Harold; but the feeblest arm of the confederacy had thrown it, and the triumph did not much augment the security of the king. The two sovereigns, whose power singly was sufficient to endanger him, were now preparing a combined attack.

William
accedes in
Normandy.

William, the rival of Harold, was the son of Robert, the fifth duke of Normandy. He was not a legitimate child;³⁸ but in these days this circumstance, though always a reproach,³⁹ did not prevent deserving talents from attaining the royal succession. William, like our Athelstan and Edmund Ironside, was admitted to assume the dignity of his father.

When Robert, obeying a fashion of his day, went to Jerusalem with a noble retinue, he appointed his boy William, though but a child, to govern Normandy in his stead, under the superintendence of a wise and faithful administration; and he engaged his nobles and the king of France to guard his arrangement.⁴⁰ Robert died at Nice, on his return from Palestine, in 1035, the same year in which Canute the Great departed from this scene of his existence.⁴¹

³⁶ Malmsb. 94.; Hunt. 367. Matt. West. p. 433. says 40. The MS. Chronicle, Tib. B. 4. mentions that Tostig came to Wight, mid swa miclum lithe swa he begitan mihte. But in stating his entrance into the Humber, it adds, mid sixtighum scipum.

³⁷ MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. mid 12 Snaceum.

³⁸ His mother was Herleva, or Harlotta, the daughter of Fullbert, an officer of the duke's household. After Robert's death she was married by Herluin, a probus miles, and left him two sons, of whom one, Odo, became

an archbishop; the other also obtained reputation. W. Gemmet. l. 7. c. 3.

³⁹ Therefore one of his nobles declared, quod nothus non deberet sibi aliisque Normannis imperare. Gem. ib. Glaber Rodolphus says of the Normans: Fuit enim usui a primo adventu ipsius gentis in Gallias, ex hujusmodi concubinarum commixtione illorum principes extitisse, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Glaber, p. 47.

⁴¹ Gemmet. l. 6. c. 12, 13. Ord. Vit. l. 3. p. 459.

William, at the childish age of eight, became the duke of Normandy.⁴² His minority tempted many nobles to rebel against him, and to be turbulent towards each other. The king of France also coveted his dominions. Normandy was for many years harassed by wars, murders, and civil feuds; and William, like Philip of Macedon, experienced adversity enough to excite his energies, and to discipline his judgment. The abilities of his friends at first, and afterwards his own good conduct, surmounted every difficulty.⁴³ He not only secured his own power, but having so often measured it against others with success, he was taught to know its strength, to nurture ambition upon that knowledge, and to look around him for new theatres on which his active mind could be employed with profit, and where increased celebrity would reward its exertions.⁴⁴

The friendship of Edward, the visit of Harold, and the state of the English court, excited and determined him to aim at the sceptre of our island.

The sudden coronation of Harold prevented the effect of any private intrigues, and left to William no hope but from his sword. William, however, knew that the combat was half gained if the moral impressions of society were in his favour, and he therefore sent an embassy to Harold, gently expostulating upon the seizure of the crown, reminding him of the sworn compact, and announcing hostilities if he persisted in the violation. After Harold's coronation, such messages could be only a theatrical trick, played off by the Norman, to call the attention of the people to the moral circumstances of the case, to introduce the claims of William publicly to their notice, to encourage his partisans, and to assume the merit of peaceful discussion. William could never have supposed that

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William's
message to
Harold.

⁴² Ord. Vit. 459.

⁴³ On William's struggles to maintain his dignity, see Guil. Pictav.; W. Gemmet.; and Orderic. Vitalis. They may be also read in

Daniel's Histoire de France, v. 1. p. 362—368.

⁴⁴ He married Mathilda, the daughter of Baldwin, count of Flanders. Gemmet. p. 277. She was descended from Alfred's daughter.

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Harold's
answer.
1066.

upon a mere message Harold would have walked down humbly from the throne which he had been so hasty to ascend.

Harold acted his part in the diplomatic farce, and gave a popular answer. His topics were as well selected as the case afforded. An oath extorted by violence could not be binding on the conscience. Human laws admitted a maiden's vow to be annulled, which was made without her parent's consent. As void must be the promise of an envoy, pledged without his master's knowledge. Besides, how could any individual alienate the right of royal succession without the national consent? And how could he abandon voluntarily a dignity with which the favour of the most potent nobles of England had honoured him?⁴⁵

By wedding Alditha, the daughter of earl Algar,⁴⁶ instead of Adeliza, the daughter of William,⁴⁷ Harold strengthened himself at home, because Mercia and Northumbria were governed by the brothers of the lady.

William
prepares.

William held council with his chiefs on his project of invasion. Some thought the chance unfavourable to Normandy, and dissuaded it.⁴⁸ The influence of the duke surmounted opposition, and preparations were vigorously made. A great number of ships were immediately constructed.⁴⁹ The tapestry, after the representation of a ship arriving from England, shews William on his throne, with the inscription, "Here duke William gave orders to build ships." Men cutting down trees with axes, and planing them into planks; others arranging and hammering these into vessels, are the next figures. Afterwards, five men appear pulling ships after them by ropes. Above are these words: "Here they drew the ships to the sea."

⁴⁵ Matt. Paris, p. 2. Matt. West. 434. Eadmer, 5.

⁴⁶ Gemmet. 285.

⁴⁷ She died at this crisis. Matt. Par. 2.

⁴⁸ Guil. Pictav. 197. and Ord. Vital. p. 493.

⁴⁹ Guil. Pictav. 197. W. Gemmet. 286,

says, he had 3000 ships built; which seem too many either to be wanted by him or to be believed by us. Ord. Vital. says, that many ships were diligently made in Normandy with their utensils, and that both clergy and laity, by their money and liquors, assisted in the business, 496.

Men carrying coats of mail, spears, swords, and wine, and two others dragging a car, laden with weapons, and a barrel, are then exhibited. The inscription is: "These carry arms to the ships, and here they draw a car with wine and arms." Such was the expedition of the workmen, that they were ready by the end of August.⁵⁰

While the means of conveyance were providing, William was active in assembling soldiers sufficient for his attempt. His purpose was diffused through every land, and the courageous adventurer was invited from every coast to share in the honour, the danger, and the booty of the conflict. Crowds of fighters came from all parts adjacent.⁵¹ He collected powerful supplies from Bretagne, France, Flanders, and their vicinity,⁵² which, joined with the soldiers whom he raised in his own Normandy, presented a mass of force not less formidable from their spirit of enterprize and their enthusiasm, than from their numbers and the military skill of William, who had been accustomed to warfare from his infancy. The emperor so far favoured the expedition as to promise to protect Normandy against any enemies who might invade it in the duke's absence.⁵³ William was here also peculiarly fortunate. The king of France, though so much interested in preventing the duke of Normandy from acquiring the additional power of the English crown, yet did not interfere to prevent the collection and departure of the expedition. Perhaps he judged it to be a desperate effort, and waited to profit by its failure. William

⁵⁰ The Roman de Rou thus describes these things:

"Fevres et charpentiers manda,
Dont veissiez à granz effors
Par Normendie à touz les pors
Merriens à traire et fust porter,
Chevilles faire et bois doler
Nesf et esquiex appareillier,
Velles estendre et mats drecier
A grant entente et a grant ost,
Tout un este et un Aost
Mistrent au navie atorner."

Lancelot, 429.

⁵¹ Convenit etiam externus miles in auxilium copiosus. Guil. Pict. 197. Rumoribus quoque viri pugnaces de vicinis regionibus exciti convenerunt. Ord. Vit. 494.

⁵² Ingentem quoque exercitum ex Normannis et Flandrensibus ac Francis et Britonibus aggregavit. W. Gemmet. 286. Gallinamque et Britones, Pictavini et Burgundiones aliique populi Cisalpini ad bellum transmarinum convolarunt. Ord. Vit. 494.

⁵³ Guil. Pict. 197.

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King of
Norway
invades.

availed himself of the oaths which Harold had broken, to give to his cause the appearance of religious sanctity; he therefore consulted with the pope, who sent him a consecrated banner.⁵⁴

While William was putting in action every means of offensive aggression, which talents like his, so exercised in warfare, could devise, the king of Norway was also summoning all the resources of his country to give prosperity to his ambitious hopes. It is a pleasing instance of the growing importance of England, that his notice to his subjects, of his intended expedition, did not meet with the unanimous concurrence of the Norwegian mountaineers. Though some, exulting in the recollection of their Haralld's achievements, thought disaster impossible; yet others intimated that England abounded with valiant chiefs and soldiers.⁵⁵ Like a part of the Norman nobility, they did not hesitate to foretel that the invasion would be a work of perilous difficulty, and doubtful issue.

The time had been, when, to mention an expedition against England, was to collect speedily a numerous fleet of eager adventurers. But now that the fortress of reputation was rising round the island, we find that as the hour of attack drew near, ominous dreams began to flit through Norway. Snorre has detailed three of these, and mentions that many other portents occurred of dire and ill-boding import.⁵⁶ The dark minds of the North discovered their feelings by their superstitions. They began to dread the English power, and they found deterring omens, because they were disposed to look for them.

Haralld Hardrada, having appointed his son Magnus to govern Norway in his absence, sailed with his other son, Olaf, and with his queen, Ellisif (Elizabeth) and her daughters, Maria and Ingegerdr, across the British ocean. He reached

⁵⁴ Guil. Pict. 197. Ord. Vit. 493. ⁵⁵ Snorre, *Saga af Haralldi Hardrada*, c. 82. p. 149.

⁵⁶ Snorre, 150—152.

Shetland; and, after a short delay, he sailed to the Orkneys. He left there his family, and directing his course along Scotland, he landed with his multitude of warriors at the Tyne.⁵⁷ His aggression seems to have been unforeseen. The duke of Normandy absorbed the attention of Harold, who did not expect that his hour of difficulty would have been made more stormy by a competitor from the North. Hardrada found no opposition of importance on the English coasts. Tostig joined him.⁵⁸ They sailed onwards to Scarborough, which they plundered and burnt. They turned the point of Holderness, and with above five hundred ships entered the Humber.⁵⁹

They proceeded up the Ouse as far towards York as Richale. The related earls, Edwine and Morkar, though taken unawares, prepared to oppose Haralld Hardrada with the same spirit which had before expelled Tostig. On the 20th of September they gave battle to the invaders near York, on the right side of the Ouse.⁶⁰ Hardrada formed his warriors into such an arrangement, that one of his wings reached to the river, and the other was flanked by a ditch and marsh full of water. The banner of the king and the flower of his warriors were on the river. His line at the ditch was weak, and tempted the attack of the earls, the brothers-in-law of Harold. They drove the enemy from their position. It was then that Hardrada rushed into the battle, and, with his compact troops, pierced through and divided the pursuing English. Some were driven to the river; some to the marsh and ditch. The slaughter was so great, that the Norwegians traversed the marsh on the bodies of the fallen.⁶¹ The Saxon account

⁵⁷ Snorre, 153. says, Klifland. So Orkneying Saga, p. 95. Hoveden, Florence, and Simeon, place his first descent at the Tyne.

⁵⁸ Flor. 429.

⁵⁹ Snorre, 154. Hoveden, 448. Flor. 429. Our writers differ on the number of Haralld's ships. Matt. Paris says 1000. So Sigeb. Gemb. p. 600. Ingulf states 200; and Malmsbury and others have 300.

⁶⁰ Hunt. 367. says: "Cujus locus pugnae in Australi parte urbis adhuc ostenditur."

⁶¹ Snorre, 155. Orkneying Saga, p. 95. The Northerns give the command of the Saxons to Walthiof and Morean. Walthiof is not mentioned by the English chroniclers in Harold's reign; but in William's reign he occurs with the Northumbrians, as in Hoveden, p. 455.

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confirms the Icelandic: it claims the first advantage for the English, and acknowledges that in the disastrous close, more were pushed into the waters than were slain by the sword.⁶² The earls were besieged in York.⁶³

Harold, watching anxiously the motions of the duke of Normandy, had stationed his troops on his southern coasts. The success of Haralld Hardrada compelled him to abandon this position of defence, and to march with his army into the North. To repel the king of Norway immediately was essential to his safety, and with this purpose he proceeded towards him so rapidly, as to reach York four days after the defeat of the earls.

Hardrada had been as much reinforced by the friends of Tostig,⁶⁴ and by those adventurers who always join the flag of victory, as the time would permit; but the sudden presence of the king of England was an incident which he did not anticipate.

He had committed his ships to the care of his son, Olaf, with a part of his forces, and had marched with the rest towards the city, to settle the government of the province. The day was beautiful and mild. The sun shone with those pleasing beams which exhilarate the spirits, and give new charms to irradiated nature. But, alas! the drama of ambition was acting in the country, and its melancholy catastrophe was about to scatter round the dismal spectacle of death. Man was hastening to deform the smiling scene with all the massacres of a ferocious battle. On a sudden, the king of Norway saw an army marching towards him. He enquired of Tostig who they were. Tostig stated his hope that they were a supply of his friends, but he knew enough of his brother's activity also to add, that they might be the English forces.

The advancing troops were soon discerned to be hostile; and Tostig, wishing a more elaborate preparation, advised a

⁶² Hoveden, 448. Flor. 429.⁶³ Malmsb. 94.⁶⁴ Snorre, 156.

retreat to the ships, that the strength of Norway might join the battle in its most concentrated vigour. The king of Norway was hero enough not to decline an offered combat; but he sent three swift couriers to command the immediate presence of his other warriors.

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He drew out his men in a long but not dense line, and, bending back the wings, he formed them into a circle every where of the same depth, with shield touching shield. In the centre the royal banner was planted, not unaptly surnamed the ravager of the earth. The peculiar mode in which the cavalry attacked, was the cause of this arrangement. Their custom was to charge promiscuously in an impetuous mass, to fly off, and to return in the same or at some other point. Haralld Hardrada was as yet weak in cavalry. It was now but the 25th September, and he had not had time to mount many of his troops. The king of England, on the contrary, came forth with the strength of the island, and of course a large part of his army must have been horse. To secure himself against this superiority, was the first care of the Norwegian.

The first line were ordered to fix their lances obliquely in the ground, with the points inclining towards the enemy, that the cavalry might impale themselves when they charged. The second line held also their spears ready to plunge into the breasts of the horses when near. The archers were joined with the array of Haralld and Tostig, to contribute their efforts to the success of the day.⁶⁵

Hardrada rode round his circle to inspect its order. His horse stumbling, he was thrown to the ground, but he sprang up, and wisely exclaimed, that it was an omen of good. Harold, who observed the incident, thought otherwise. He enquired who that Norwegian was, clothed in a blue tunic and with a splendid helmet, who had fallen. He was answered,

⁶⁵ Snorre, 159.

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the king of Norway. "He is a large and majestic person," replied Harold, "but his fortune will be disastrous."⁶⁶

An offer was sent to Tostig, before the battle joined, to give him Northumbria, and other honours, if he would withdraw from the impending conflict. Tostig remarked, that such a proposition in the preceding winter would have saved many lives: "But," added he, "if I should accept these terms, what is to be the compensation of the king, my ally?" "Seven feet of ground, or, as he is a very tall man, perhaps a little more," was the answer. This intimation closed the negotiation, for Tostig was faithful to his friend.⁶⁷

The Norwegians, not having expected a battle on that day, are said to have been without their coats of mail. The king of Norway sung some stanzas on the circumstance, and awaited the attack. His orders were implicitly obeyed. The charges of the English cavalry were received on the implanted points, and while the Norwegians kept their circle unbroken, they repulsed every attack. Weary of their unprevailing efforts, the English began to relax in some confusion, and their adversaries were tempted to pursue. It was then that the fortune of Norway first drooped. The English returned to the charge. The Norwegians were out of their defensive arrangement, and felt the destructive fury of the English weapons. Hardrada encouraged his men by the most heroic exertions; but he could not bind victory to his standard. A fatal dart pierced his throat; and his fall gave the first triumph to his kingly competitor.⁶⁸

Tostig assumed the command, and the battle still raged. Harold again offered life and peace to his brother, and the Norwegians, but the enraged Tostig was deaf to reconciliation. Victory or death was his decision; and the arrival of the division from the ships, under the command of Eysteinn Orri, gave new hopes to his fury.

⁶⁶ Snorre, 160.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

in Snorre, 174. He was fifty years of age

⁶⁸ Snorre, 163. See Haralld's character when he died. Ib. 175.

These fresh troops were completely armed. Their attack was so vehement, that the fortune of the day was nearly changed; but they were exhausted by the speed with which they had hurried to the place of conflict. Their exertions relaxed as their strength ebbed; and after a desperate struggle, Tostig and the flower of Norway perished.⁶⁹ Harold, who had shewn himself the ardent warrior through all the combat, permitted Olave, the son of the unfortunate Hardrada, and Paul, the earl of the Orkneys,⁷⁰ to retire from the island with their surviving friends and a few ships.⁷¹ Olave went to the Orkneys, and in the following spring to Norway, where he reigned jointly with his brother Magnus.⁷²

Two of Harold's competitors had now fallen; and if an interval had elapsed before the assault of the other, of sufficient space to have permitted him to have supplied the consumption of the late battles, and to have organized a new force, it is probable that the duke of Normandy would have shared the fate of the king of Norway. But three days only intervened between the defeat of the Norwegians, and the landing of William. He arrived at Pevensey on the 28th of September,⁷³ and the king of Norway had fallen on the 25th.

Harold, expecting an invasion from William, had in the spring assembled, on his southern coasts, the best bulwark of

⁶⁹ Snorre, 165. Huntingdon says, there never was a severer battle, p. 368. He, Malmsbury, and others, state, that at one period of the conflict, a Norwegian defended the bridge against the English army, and killed with his battle-axe forty soldiers before he was destroyed. Ord. Vit. mentions, that a great heap of bones in his time marked on the spot the dreadful slaughter of the day, 500.

⁷⁰ Hoveden, 448. Ingulf, 69. On Paul's descent and family, see the Orkneyinga Saga, p. 91—93.

⁷¹ Ingulf, Hoveden, and others, say with 20. The MS. Chron. Tib. B. 4. has 24. This mentions Olaf's departure thus: "Se Kyng tha

geaf grythe Olafe thaes Norna cynges suna 7 heore bpe' 7 than eorle of Orcan ege 7 eallon than theon tha scypu to lafe wæron 7 hi foron tha upp to uran Kyninge 7 sworon athas th hi æfre woldon fryth 7 freondscype into thisan lande haldan 7 se cyng hi let ham faran mid 24 scypum. Thas twa folc gefeoht wæron gefremmede binnan fif nihtan."

⁷² Orkneyinga Saga, 95. Snorre, 171—176.

⁷³ The printed Chronicle says on Michaelmas day. But the MS. Tib. B. 4. says, "On sce' Michaels mæsse æfen." So the Lambard MS. Ord. Vit. 500, agrees with the MS.

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the island. He stationed his fleet off Wight, to encounter the Norman on the seas, and encamped an army in its vicinity. This guard was continued during the summer and autumn, and while it watched at its allotted post, the throne of Harold was secure. But on the 8th of September,⁷⁴ the fleet, which had lain along the coast at Pevensey, Hastings, and the neighbouring ports, was, from the want of provisions, obliged to disperse.⁷⁵ Harold, being immediately after occupied by the Norwegian invasion, neglected to supply and reinstate it. By this unhappy mistake, he removed the main obstacle to William's expedition.

William had completed his armament in August, and it lay in the mouth of the Dive, a little river between Havre and Caen. Fortunately for his enterprise, the wind was adverse. If it had been favourable, he would have sailed, and the fleet of Harold would have received the first shock of the storm. If the English navy had been defeated, an army was lining its coasts, which would have disputed his landing. Should victory still have followed him, his force must have been diminished by the combats, and he would have had then to wrestle with the strength of the island, directed by the active talents of Harold. But the contrary winds detained him for a month at the Dive;⁷⁶ and in this interval the English fleet left its position, and the invasion of Norway called Harold from the southern coasts.

At last the currents of the atmosphere came into the direction he desired, and the fleet sailed from the Dive, round Havre, to St. Vallery, near Dieppe, which was the nearest port between Normandy and England. Some unfavourable events had occurred. Of the large fleet several vessels were wrecked; and many of the adventurers, whose courage lessened from their leisure of reflection on the perils of the expedition, abandoned his standard. William caused the bodies of the

⁷⁴ Hoveden and Florence mark the nativity of St. Mary as the day. This was 8th September.

⁷⁵ The MS. Chron. B. 1. has a long paragraph on this.

⁷⁶ Ord. Vital. 500. Guil. Pict. 198.

drowned to be buried with speed and privacy; he exhilarated the spirits of his army by abundance of provisions, and he animated their drooping hopes by his eloquent exhortations. To excite their enthusiasm, he caused St. Vallery's body to be carried in procession, under the pretence of imploring, and perhaps with the hope of obtaining a propitious navigation.

A general eagerness to embark now pervaded the expedition. The duke, more impatient than any, was every where urging his soldiers to hasten to their ships. To prevent disasters usual to an unknown coast, he enjoined all the vessels to anchor round his at night, and not to recommence their voyage till, the lighted beacon on the top of his mast having given the signal, the general clangor of the trumpets should announce the time of resailing.⁷⁷

With above one thousand ships,⁷⁸ replete with horses,⁷⁹ and every implement of battle, he quitted his native shores. During the day, his ardent spirit not only led the van of his fleet, but his ship so far outsailed the others, that when a mariner was ordered to look round from the top of the mast, he declared he saw nothing but the clouds and the ocean. William, though impatient for his landing, yet with dignified composure, ordered his men to cast anchor, and calmly took

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⁷⁷ These particulars are from the contemporary William of Poitou, whose valuable fragment was printed by Du Chesne, from a MS. in our Cotton Library.

⁷⁸ It has been already remarked, that Wil. Gemmet. gives to William 3000 ships. The very ancient author of the Roman de Rou says, he had read of 3000 ships, but that he had heard it declared to his father that there were 700 all but four.

" Ne vous voil mie mettre en leitre,
Ne je ne me voil entremeitre
Quels barons et quels chevaliers,
Granz vavasours, granz soudoiers
Ont li Dus en sa compaignie
Quant il prist toute sa navie.
Mez ceu oi dire a mon pere,
Bien m'en souvient, mes vallet ere,
Quer sept cent nesf quatre mains furent,
Quant de St. Valery s'esmurent,

Que nesf, que batteaux, que esqueiz
A porter armes et hernoiz.
Ai je en escript trouvé,
Ne sai dire s'est verité,
Que il y eut trois mile nesf,
Qui porterent velles et tresf."

Lanc. 431.

La Chronique de Normandie intimates, that seme escriptures temoingnent neuf cens et sept grandes nesf a granz tresf et voiles, sans li menu vaisselin. lb. M. Lancelot remarks, that the menu vaisselin may supply somewhat of the great difference between the rumours. I have stated in the text the expressions of Guil. Pictav.

⁷⁹ The tapestry of Bayeux has several ships with horses.

a cheerful refreshment. A second sailor ascended, and beheld four ships coming into the horizon. Another, at a farther interval, declared he saw a sailing forest. The duke's heart swelled with joy, and he anticipated all the triumphs of his daring adventure.⁸⁰

At Pevensey their voyage ceased on the 28th September. They landed peaceably, for no opposing force was near.⁸¹ They made no stay here, and proceeded immediately to Hastings, to procure food.⁸² As William landed from his ship, it happened that he fell. In these days, when the mind in its most infant state was full of the groundless fantasies of childhood, the accident was interpreted into an omen of disaster; but the spreading panic was checked by the judicious soldier who raised William from the ground. Seeing his hands full of mud, he exclaimed, "Fortunate General! you have already taken England. See, its earth is in your hands."⁸³ How excitable must be the mind of man, when a casual stumble can intimidate thousands, and a lucky expression re-assure them! How difficult must it be to lead such excitability into a steady course of wisdom and virtue!

The duke forbade plunder, and built military works both at Pevensey and Hastings, to protect his shipping.⁸⁴ It is mentioned that he went out with twenty-five companions, to explore the country. They fell into such a rugged course,

⁸⁰ Guil. Pict. 199. To this repast of William, M. Lancelot refers that in the tapestry. I think his supposition is decidedly and obviously erroneous.

⁸¹ Guil. Pict. 199. The tapestry shews this. After representing many ships in full sail, some with armed men, and some with horses, with the inscription: "Mare transivit et venit ad Pevenesæ," it shews the landing of horses unmolested.

⁸² The tapestry details this curiously. Four armed horsemen are riding. The words over them are, "And here the soldiers hastened to Hastings to seize provisions." One man is leading a sheep; another is standing near with an axe, looking at an ox; another is carrying some bundle on his

shoulders near a man with a pig. The cookery, the serving, and the enjoyment of the repast, are then successively represented with appropriate inscriptions. The little anonymous narration, written in the reign of Henry I. and published by Taylor from a MS. at Oxford, after landing them at Pevensey, adds, "Sed non diutius ibi moratus, cum omni exercitu suo venit ad alium portum non longe ab isto situm quam vocant Hastings ibique omnem suam militiam requiescere jussit," p. 190.

⁸³ Matt. West. 435. and others.

⁸⁴ Wil. Gemmet. 286. Ord. Vit. 500. The tapestry represents this construction of the castle at Hastings.

that they were obliged to return on foot; and the army remarked, with high approbation, that William had burthened himself with the armour of one of his party, who was unable to get to the camp without putting it off.⁸⁵ William was now involved in an expedition which required the most zealous and self-devoting support of all his soldiers. Few things interest more strongly than the useful condescensions of the great, and it is an argument of William's discernment and true dignity of mind, that he seized such little occasions of exciting, in his army, an affectionate attachment.

A Norman friend conveyed to William the tidings of Harold's victory over Norway. The counsel of alarm was added to the news. "He is coming against you with all his power, and I think you will but be as despised dogs against it. You have prudently governed all your affairs in Normandy; be not now rash; keep to your fortifications; meet him not in battle."

William's mind was above these little agitations of fear. He had thrown his die. His spirit was fixed to stand the full venture, and to endure all the consequences, whether fatal or propitious. He returned for answer, that he should not entrench himself, but should give the battle as early as he could join it. He declared that this would have been his resolution, if he had headed only 10,000 men, instead of the 60,000 who were assembled round his banners.⁸⁶

Harold received the information of William's landing, while he was dining at York.⁸⁷ The impressive incident would have summoned a wary mind to the most deliberate circumspection. A new enemy coming in such power, demanded the wisest exertions of military intelligence. But the mind of Harold possessed not the judgment of his great adversary. His bravery had more vivacity than discretion, and its natural ardour was stimulated into presumption by his victory against

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⁸⁵ Guil. Pict. 199.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Hunt. 368.

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the king of Norway. He looked upon William as his devoted prey; and instead of collecting all his means of defence, and multiplying these by the wisdom of their application, he flew to London, as if he had only to combat in order to conquer.

This triumphant vanity was the instrument as well as the signal of his ruin. In the deadly contest against Hardrada, he had lost many of his bravest warriors. By an ill-timed covetousness, he disgusted the surviving; for he monopolized the plunder. When he marched to London against William, a large part of his army deserted him. Those only who served on pay, and as mercenaries, kept to him.⁸⁸

He sent spies to inspect William's force. The judicious duke, who knew his strength, and the good appointment of his army, had nothing to conceal. He caused the spies to be well feasted, and to be led through his encampment. On their return to Harold, they magnified what they had beheld; but added, that from their shaven faces, they should have taken the Normans for an army of divines. Harold laughed at the conceit, but had sense enough to remark, that the divines would prove very formidable soldiers.⁸⁹

It was the interest of Harold to delay a battle with the invaders, but it was his passion to hasten it. His brother Gurth reminded him, that he had not recruited his losses in the north. Such an observation was evidence of his judgment. His other remarks, that if Harold fought, it would be committing perjury, and therefore that he, Gurth, had better lead on the English in his stead, were deservedly despised by Harold.⁹⁰ The perjury, if any, was in the resistance, and could not be diminished by the change of the commander. But with what energy could the troops be expected to fight in a quarrel of personal competition, if Harold was away? His

⁸⁸ Malmsb. 94. Matt. West. 434.

Rou mentions the account of the spies. Lanc.

⁸⁹ Malmsb. 100. The English did not p. 456.

shave the upper lip, lb. The Roman de ⁹⁰ Malmsb. 100.

absence, on such grounds, would have sanctified the claim of William, and might have tainted his own fame with the perilous imputation of cowardice.

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Monastic messengers were reciprocally sent by the two rivals. The one from the duke is said to have offered Harold his option of three proposals. To quit the throne, to reign under William, or to decide the dispute by a single combat.

The two first propositions Harold was too courageous to regard. The last was more compatible with his humour. But Harold had been William's guest, and well knew his personal prowess. The Norman excelled most men of his day, in strength, stature, agility, and skill. As he possessed such notorious superiority, there was little courage in his offer of the duel, and Harold could not be disgraced in refusing it. Harold therefore answered, with unusual discretion, when he declared, that God should judge between them.⁹¹

Harold staid but six days at London to collect troops for the collision with the invaders;⁹² his impatient presumption could not tarry for the force that was wanted to secure success. He left the city, and marched all night towards Hastings.⁹³ His hope was, to surprize the army of the duke,⁹⁴ as he had surprized the Norwegians; and so confident were his expectations, that he sent round a fleet of 700 vessels to hinder William's escape.⁹⁵

This was another measure of his ill-judgment. A very large part of his force must have been lost to him in manning these vessels; and yet, though he had not had time to collect an army of great power, he deprived himself, needlessly, of a numerous support, by sending it on the seas. Prudence

⁹¹ Malmsb. 100. Guil. Pict. 200. Mat. Paris, 3.

⁹² Will. Gemmet. 287.

⁹³ Gemmet. 287.

⁹⁴ Ord. Vit. 500. Guil. Pict. 201.

⁹⁵ Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 500. L'Antienne Chronique de Normandie, and the Roman de Rou (Lanc. 444—446) mention that William burnt and destroyed his own shipping, to make his army more desperate.

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would have counselled him to have opened a passage on the ocean for his enemies retreat. If he had coolly reasoned, he must have seen that William placed the issue of his adventure upon a land battle. To wage this successfully, he concentrated all his strength. Harold, instead of meeting him with his most consolidated force, favoured the wishes of his enemies by manning a fleet, whose exertions could not have the least influence on the impending conflict. But when vanity assumes the helm of our conduct, discretion disappears.

In projecting to surprize William, he proved how little he understood of the duke's character. Alert in obtaining notice of Harold's approach, William immediately commanded his men to remain all night under arms.⁹⁶ Deterred by this preparation, Harold ventured no night attack.

On the spot, afterwards called Battle, the English rested on an adjacent hill. The Normans quitted Hastings,⁹⁷ and occupied an eminence opposite.⁹⁸ The night before the battle was spent by the English in festivity; by the Normans in devotion.⁹⁹

While William was putting on his armour, it happened that he inverted his coat of mail. This petty mistake was a fatal omen; but William, like all great souls, disdaining such puerilities, said, with a calm countenance, "If I believed in omens, I should not fight to-day, but I never credited such tales, and never loved the superstitious. In every concern which I ought to undertake, I commit myself, for the result, to my Creator's ordination."¹⁰⁰

At the command of their leader, the Normans, who were in the camp, armed. William, with solemn devotion, heard mass, and received the sacrament. He hung round his neck

⁹⁶ Gemm. 287.

⁹⁷ The tapestry represents them as departing from Hastings to the place of battle.

⁹⁸ Taylor's Anon. 192.

⁹⁹ Malmsb. 101.

¹⁰⁰ "Si ego in sortem crederem, hodie

amplius in bellum non introirem, sed ego nunquam sortibus credidi neque sortilegos amavi. In omni negotio quodcumque agere debui, creatori meo semper me commendavi." Taylor's Anon. p. 192. Guil. Pict. p. 201, mentions it.

the relics on which Harold had sworn, and proceeded to arrange his troops; ¹⁰¹ his standard was entrusted to Toustain the Fair. ¹⁰²

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He divided his army into three bodies. In front he placed his light infantry, armed with arrows and balistæ. Behind these were the heavy armed foot. His last division was composed of his cavalry, among whom he stationed himself. ¹⁰³

He strengthened their determined valour by an impressive harangue. ¹⁰⁴ He reminded them of the achievements of Hastings, whose actions these pages have commemorated. He bade them to recollect Rollo, the founder of their nation, and the uniform successes of their ancestors against the Franks. He noticed their most recent exploits. ¹⁰⁵ He assured them that they were to fight not merely for victory, but for life. If they exerted themselves like men, glory and wealth were their rewards; if they were defeated, a cruel death, a hopeless captivity, and everlasting infamy, were the inevitable consequences. Escape, there was none. On one side, an unknown and hostile country; on the other, the blockaded sea precluded flight. ¹⁰⁶ He added, "Let any of the English come forward, of those whom our ancestors have an hundred times defeated, and demonstrate that the people of Rollo have ever been unfortunate in war, and I will abandon my enterprize. Is it not then a disgrace, that a nation accustomed to be conquered, a nation so broken by war, a nation not even having arrows, should pitch themselves in regular battle against you? Is it not a disgrace, that the perjured Harold should dare to face me in your presence? I am astonished that you

¹⁰¹ Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 500.

¹⁰² Le Roman de Rou mentions, that William first offered this honour to Raoul de Conches, and Gautier Guiffart, who declined it. See it quoted, Lanc. 450—453.

¹⁰³ Guil. Pict. 201. Ord. Vit. 501.

¹⁰⁴ The tapestry represents William speak-

ing to his soldiers. The inscription imports: "Here William exhorts his soldiers to prepare themselves manfully and wisely to battle against the English army."

¹⁰⁵ Hen. Hunt. 368. Bromton.

¹⁰⁶ Guil. Pict. 201.

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should have beheld those who destroyed your fathers, and my kinsman Alfred, by the basest treachery, and that they should yet be in existence. Raise, soldiers, your standards. Let neither diffidence nor moderation check your anger. Let the lightning of your glory shine resplendent from the east to the west. Let the thunders of your impetuous onset be heard afar, ye generous avengers of the murdered!"¹⁰⁷

While he was yet speaking, his men hastened to engage. Their ardour could not tarry for his conclusion. One Taillefer, singing the song of Roland and Charlemagne,¹⁰⁸ even outstripped his friends, and killed an English ensign bearer. Another also became his victim. A third overpowered him, and then the armies joined.¹⁰⁹ The cry of the Normans was, "God help us." The English exclaimed, "The holy cross; the cross of God."¹¹⁰

The English, chiefly infantry, were arranged by Harold into an impenetrable wedge. Their shields covered their bodies. Their arms wielded the battle-axe. Harold, whose courage was equal to his dignity, quitted his horse to share the danger and the glory on foot. His brothers accompanied him; and his banner, in which the figure of a man in combat, woven sumptuously with gold and jewels, shone conspicuous to his troops, was implanted near him.¹¹¹

William, whose eye was searching every part of the field, enquired of a warrior near him, where he thought Harold stood. "In that dense mass on the top of the hill, for there his standard seems displayed," was the answer. William expressed his surprize at his presence in the conflict, and

¹⁰⁷ Hen. Hunt. 368.

¹⁰⁸ " Taillefer qui mout bien chantout,
Sur un cheval qui tost alout,
Devant euls aloit chantant,
De Kallemaigne et de Roullant,
Et d'Olivier et de Vassaux
Qui moururent en Rains chevaux."

Roman de Rou, p. 461.

Malmsbury and others mention, that the Normans sung the song of Roland.

¹⁰⁹ Hen. Hunt. 368. Rad. Dict. 480. Bromton, 960.

¹¹⁰ The Roman de Rou, p. 461. which says:

" Alierot est en Engleiz
Qui Sainte Croix est en Franceiz
Et Goderode est autrement
Comme en François Dex tout puissant."

¹¹¹ Malmsb. 101.

his confidence that his breach of faith would on that day be punished.¹¹²

The English had possessed themselves of the hilly ground, which was flanked by a wood. The cavalry dismounted, and added to the firm mass of Harold's array. The Norman foot, advancing, discharged their missile weapons with effect; but the English, with patient valour, kept their ground. They returned the attack with spears and lances; with their terrible battle-axes, their ancient weapons, and with stones, whose falling masses were directed to overwhelm. The battle glowed. Distant weapons were abandoned for a closer conflict. The clamour of the engaging soldiers was drowned in the clashing of their weapons, and the groans of the dying.¹¹³ Valour abounded on both sides, and the chieftains fought with all the desperate firmness of personal enmity and ardent ambition.

Befriended by the elevation of their ground, by the mass of their phalanx, and by their Saxon axes, which cut through all the armour of their adversaries, the undaunted English not merely sustained, but repelled every attack. Intimidated by such invincible fortitude, the foot and cavalry of Bretagne, and all the other allies of William in the left wing, gave way. The impression extended along all his line. It was increased by a rumour, that the duke had fallen. Dismay began to unnerve his army; a general flight seemed about to ensue.¹¹⁴

William, observing the critical moment which threatened destruction to all his glory, rushed among the fugitives, striking or menacing them with his spear. His helmet was thrown from his head. The indignant countenance of their leader was visible: "Behold me—I live; and I will conquer yet, with God's assistance. What madness induces you to fly? What way can be found for your escape? They whom, if you chuse, you may kill like cattle, are driving and destroying you.—You fly from victory—from deathless honour.—You run upon ruin

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¹¹² Taylor's Anon. Hist. 192.

¹¹³ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

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and everlasting disgrace. If you retreat, not one of you but will perish."¹¹⁵

At these words they rallied—he led them to another onset. His sword strewed his path with slaughter. Their valour and their hopes revived. Their charge upon their pursuers was destruction; they rushed impetuously on the rest.

But the main body of the English continued unmoved and impenetrable. All the fury of the Normans and their allies could force no opening. An unbroken wall of courageous soldiery was every where present.

Depressed by this resistance, William's mind was roused to attempt a stratagem. He had seen the success with which his rallied troops had turned upon those who pursued them. He resolved to hazard a feigned retreat, to seduce the English into the disorder of a confident pursuit, and to profit by their diffusion."¹¹⁶

A body of a thousand horse were entrusted with the execution of this manœuvre. With a horrible outcry they rushed upon the English; then suddenly checking themselves, as if intimidated, they affected a hasty flight."¹¹⁷ The English were cheated. They threw themselves eagerly on the retreating Normans, and at first they prospered; for the Normans retired upon a great ditch, or excavation, somewhat concealed by its vegetation. Driven upon this, great numbers perished, and some of the English were dragged into the ruin."¹¹⁸ But

¹¹⁵ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Taylor's Anon. Hist. 193.

¹¹⁸ Hunt. 368. Rad. Dict. 480. Bromton, 960. The Roman de Rou states this:

"En la champagne out un fossé
Normans l'avient eux adossé
Embelinant l'orent passé
Ne l'avoient mie esgardé.
Engleis on tant Normans hastez
Et tant empoins et tant boutez
Ez fossez les ont fait ruser,
Chevaux et hommes gambeter

Mout voissiez hommes tomber,
Les uns sur les autres verser
Et tresbuchier et adenter
Ne s'en pooient relever;
Des Engleis y mourut assez
Que Normans ont a euls tirez."

Lanc. 464.

The tapestry seems to represent this. After the fall of Harold's brothers, it has the inscription: "Here the English and Franks fell together in battle." The figures are warriors fighting, and horses in positions which imply violent falls.

while this incident was occupying their attention, the duke's main body rushed between the pursuers, and the rest of their army. The English endeavoured to regain their position; the cavalry turned upon them, and, thus enclosed, they fell victims to the skilful movement of their opponents.¹¹⁹ Twice was the Norman artifice repeated, and twice had the English to mourn their credulous pursuit.¹²⁰ In the heat of the struggle, twenty Normans pledged themselves to each other to attack, in conjunction, the great standard of Harold. Eying the expected prize, they rushed impetuously towards it. In attempting to penetrate through the hostile battalions, many of the party fell; but their object not having been foreseen, the survivors secured it.¹²¹

The battle continued with many changes of fortune. The rival commanders distinguished themselves for their personal exertions. Harold emulated the merit, and equalled the achievements of the bravest soldier, at the same that he discharged the vigilant duty of the general.¹²² William was constantly the example to his troops. He had three horses killed under him;¹²³ but, undaunted by peril, he was every where the foremost. Such was the general enthusiasm, that they who were exhausted by loss of blood and strength, still fought on, leaning on their supporting shields. The more disabled, by their voice and gestures, strove to animate their friends.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Hunt. 368. Bromt. 960. At one period of the conflict, probably in this, Odo, the half brother of William, and bishop of Bayeux, rendered him great services by rallying his men. The tapestry, immediately after the preceding incident, shews him on horseback in armour, with a kind of club, amid other cavalry. The words over are, "Here Odo, bishop, holding a stick, encourages the youths." The Roman de Rou also mentions his great and useful activity:

"Sor un cheval tout blanc seoit,
Toute la gent le congnoissoit,
Un baston tenoit en son poing,
Là où veoît le grand besoing

Faisoit les chevaliers torner,
Et la bataille arrester.
Souvent les faisoit assaillir,
Et souvent les fesoit ferir.
Des que le point du jour entra,
Que la bataille commencha
Dessi que nonne trespasa,
Fu chi de cha, fu si de la."

Lanc. 466.

¹²⁰ Guil. Pict. 202.

¹²¹ Hunt. 368. Bromt. 960.

¹²² Malmsb. 101.

¹²³ Malmsb. 101. Guil. Pict. 203. Matt. West. 438.

¹²⁴ Guil. Pict. 203.

BOOK
VI.
Harold
the Second.
1066.

The sun was departing from the western horizon, and the victory was still undecided. While Harold lived and fought, his valorous countrymen were invincible.¹²⁵ But an order of the duke's, by occasioning his fate, gained the splendid laurel. To harass the hinder ranks of that firm mass which he could not by his front attack destroy, he directed his archers not to shoot horizontally at the English, but to discharge their arrows vigorously upwards into the sky. These fell with fatal effect on the more distant troops.¹²⁶ The random shafts descended like impetuous hail, and one of them pierced the gallant Harold in the eye.¹²⁷ A furious charge of the Norman horse increased the disorder, which the king's wound must have occasioned; his pain disabled him, and he was mortally wounded. As the evening closed, one of the combatants had the brutality to strike into his thigh after he was dead, for which William, with nobler feelings, disgraced him on the field.¹²⁸ Panic scattered the English on their leader's death.¹²⁹ The Normans vigorously pursued, though the broken ground and frequent ditches checked their ardour. Encouraged by observing this, a part of the fugitives rallied, and, indignant at the prospect of surrendering their country to foreigners, they fought to renew the combat. William ordered the count Eustace and his soldiers to the attack. The count exposed the peril, and

¹²⁵ Malmsb. 101. Matt. West. 437.

¹²⁶ Hunt. 368.

¹²⁷ Hunt. 368. Malmsb. 101. The Roman de Rou states the incident thus:

"Heralt à l'estendart estoit,
A son poer se deffendoit.
Mez mout estoit de l'œil grevez
Pour ceu qu'il li estoit crevez,
A la douleur que il sentoit
Du cop de l'œil qui li doloit,
Vint un armé par la bataille,
Heralt feri sor la ventaille
A terre le fist tresbuchier;
A ceu qu'il se vout condrecier,
Un chevalier le rabati,
Qui en la cuisse le feri,
En la cuisse parmi le gros
La plaie fu disu qu'a l'os." Lanc. 467.

¹²⁸ Matt. West. 438. Malmsb. 101. The tapestry seems to represent this; for under the words, "Here Harold king was slain," an armed man is figured falling dead, his battle-axe flying from him. Another upon horseback leans forward, and with a sword is wounding his thigh.

¹²⁹ The tapestry ends with the flight of the English. "On ne voit plus ce qui reste de la tapisserie que des traits qui tracent des figures; peutetre n'y a t'il jamais eu que ces traits; l'ouvrage dessiné et tracé fut interrompu par la mort de la princesse Mathilde; peut etre aussi le tems et les differens accidens qu'a essayez cette extremite de la tapisserie, ont rougé le tissu." Lanc. 468.

advised a retreat. He was at this instant vehemently struck in his neck, and his face was covered with his blood. The duke, undismayed, led on his men to the conflict. Some of his noblest Normans fell, but he completed his hard-earned victory.¹³⁰

CHAP.
XIV.
Harold
the Second.
1066.

The body of Harold was found near his two brothers, and was carried to the Norman camp. His mother offered its weight of gold, for the privilege of burying it; but she was denied the melancholy satisfaction.¹³¹ The two brothers of Harold fell also in the battle.¹³²

William escaped unhurt.¹³³ But the slaughter of his Normans had been great.¹³⁴

His victory was splendid; but if Harold had not fallen, it would have contributed very little to gain the crown of England. It was the death of Harold which gave William the sceptre. The force of England was unconquered. A small portion of it only had been exerted;¹³⁵ and if Harold had survived, or any other heir at all competent to the crisis, William would have earned no more from his victory than the privilege of fighting another battle with diminished strength. When he landed on England, he came with all his power. The fleet of the Anglo-Saxons was afterwards ready to cut off further succour, if such could have been raised for him in Normandy; and it is probable, that if by the fall of Harold, England had not been suddenly left without a chief, the

¹³⁰ Guil. Pict. 203.

¹³¹ So says Guil. Pict. 204. "In castra Ducis delatus, qui tumultandum eum Guillelmo agnomine Maletto concessit, non matri pro corpore dilectæ prolis auri par pondus offerenti—Æstimavit indignum fore ad matris libitum sepeliri cujus ob nimiam cupiditatem insepulti remanerent innumerabiles." So in his following apostrophe, he says: "In cruore jacuisti et in littoreo tumulto jaces." In opposition to this contemporary evidence, the English writers, as Malmsb. 102. and others, say: "Corpus Haroldi

matri repetenti sine pretio misit licet illa multum per legatos obtulisset." It is added, that the body was buried at Waltham. Orderic's statement, p. 502. is like Guil. Pict.

¹³² The tapestry places the death of Gurth and Leofwine, the two brothers, some time before Harold's.

¹³³ Matt. West. 439.

¹³⁴ Hoveden, 449. Sim. Dun. 197.

¹³⁵ That Harold had rushed with vain confidence to the battle, with an inferior force, is a general assertion among our old chroniclers.

BOOK
VI.
Harold
the Second.
1066

battle of Hastings would have been to William but a scene of brilliant glory, speedily followed by a melancholy catastrophe. In great revolutions much is effected by active talents; but perhaps more by that arrangement of events over which man has no control. It was William's intention to have sailed¹³⁶ a month sooner than he appeared. If his wishes had been fulfilled, he would have invaded Harold before the king of Norway, and would perhaps have shared his fate. For if the English king, with the disadvantages of a loss and desertion of his veteran troops, of new levies, of an inferior force, and an overweening presumption,¹³⁷ was yet able to balance the conflict with William's most concentrated, select, and skilfully exerted strength, until night was closing; if the victory was only decided by his casual death; how different would have been the issue, if Harold had met him with the troops which he marched against the Norwegians! But Providence had ordained, that a new dynasty should give new manners, new connections, and new fortunes, to the English nation. Events were therefore so made to follow, that all the talents of Harold, and the force of England, should not avail against the vicissitude intended. While Harold's fleet watched the ocean, the adverse wind kept William in port. This fleet was dispersed

¹³⁶ At the foot of his anonymous MS. Taylor found this catalogue of the ships which were supplied for William's invasion:

By Willelmo dapifero filio Osberni sexaginta naves.

Hugone postea comite de Cestria totidem.
Hugone de Mumfort quinquaginta naves et sexaginta milites.

Romo Elemosinario Fescanni postea episcopo Lincolniensi unam navem cum viginti militibus.

Nicholao Abbate de Sancto Audoeno quindecim naves cum centum militibus.

Roberto Comite Augi sexaginta naves.

Fulcone Dauno quadraginta naves.

Geroldo Dapifero totidem.

Willelmo Comite Deurons octoginta naves.

Rogero de Mumgumeri sexeginta naves.

Rogero de Boumunt sexaginta naves.

Odono Episcopo de Baios centum naves.

Roberto de Morokmer centum et viginti.

Waltero Giffardo triginta cum centum militibus.

Extra has naves quæ computatæ simul M efficiunt habuit Dux a quibusdam suis hominibus secundum possibilitatem unius cujusque multas alias naves, p. 209.

¹³⁷ One chief reason of Harold's hastening to fight before he was fully prepared, is declared to have been, that he might find the Normans before they fled out of the country. Previous to the battle, he is said to have affirmed, that he had never done any thing more willingly in his life than his coming to meet William. Taylor's Anon. Hist. 191.

by its stores failing; and at the same time the invasion of the king of Norway compelled Harold to leave his coast unguarded, and to hurry his soldiers to the north of the island. In this critical interval, while Harold was so occupied by land, and before his fleet had got revictualled, the winds became auspicious to William, and he landed in safety. Immediately after this, the Saxon fleet was enabled to sail.

CHAP.
XIV.
Harold
the Second.
1066.

Harold had in the mean time conquered the Norwegians; but this very event, which seemed to insure the fate of William, became his safety. It inflated Harold's mind so as to disgust his own soldiery, and to rush to a decisive conflict in contempt of his adversary, before he was prepared to meet him. When the battle had begun, the abilities of Harold, and the bravery of his countrymen, seemed again likely to ruin the hopes of his great competitor. The death of Harold then terminated the contest, while William, who had been in as much danger as Harold, was not penetrated by a single weapon.

But it was ordained, by the Supreme Director of events, that England should no longer remain insulated from the rest of Europe; but should, for its own benefit and the improvement of mankind, become connected with the affairs of the continent. The Anglo-Saxon dynasty was therefore terminated; and a Sovereign, with great continental possessions, was led to the English throne. By the consequences of this revolution, England acquired that interest and established that influence in the transactions and fortunes of its neighbours, which have continued to the present day, with equal advantages to its inhabitants and to Europe.

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1066.
Harold
the Second.

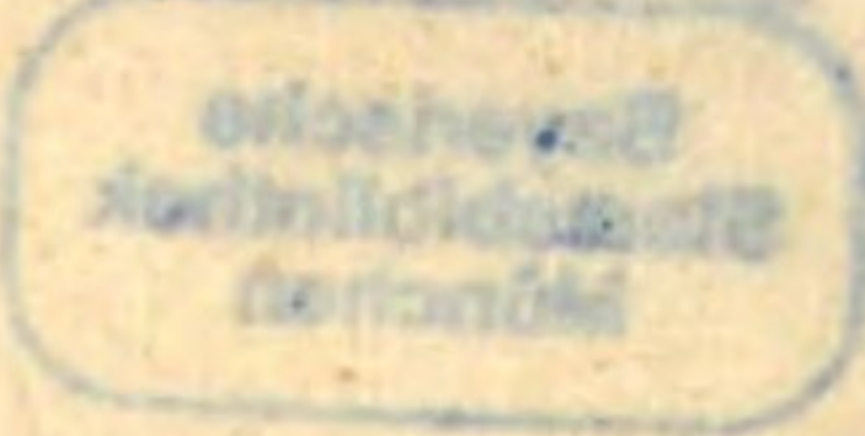
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